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HARGRAVE;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES

OF

A MAN OF FASHION.

BY

MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHORESS OF "THE WIDOW BARNABY," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1843.



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H A R G R A V E.

CHAPTER I.

THE sisters, though each had much to tell the other, met not that night after the ball was over, nor even till the first sunny portion of the day, which, under such circumstances, is called night, had long passed over them. Sabina, indeed, with her head full of the mysterious disappearance of Madame Bertrand, paused before the door of Adèle as she went by, and greatly longed to turn the lock and enter, for the purpose of relieving herself of the load of fears and conjectures which oppressed her. But she had not the heart to

wake her, and passed on. The precaution was kind, but very useless. Adèle, instead of sleeping, had spent the night, from various causes, in a state of agitation which would have rendered the appearance of her sister a real blessing. She had made up her mind to be very wise, and to go to bed as soon as she had despatched Roger Humphries on his mission ; and had even proceeded so far towards putting this discreet resolution in practice as to disembarass her beautiful brow of its wreath, collect the long silken braids of her dark tresses into one rich knot, exchange the delicate tissues of the ball-room for the soft folds of a *robe de chambre*, and all this without any aid from her “ waiting gentlewoman,” for she was in no mood to meet questions, though uttered only by the eye. But ere she had proceeded farther towards seeking the rest of which she stood so much in need, a feeling that she was not yet sufficiently tranquil to find it induced her to open the window of her room, which in general commanded a view of the garden, but at present offered little to the sight, excepting the canvass roofs of the various erections which

covered nearly the whole area of what was usually a very handsome lawn.

For some moments she enjoyed the cool fresh breath of the April daybreak on her feverish cheek, and amused herself the while by watching the artificial light emitted here and there through the temporary roofs and walls, battling with the faint but increasing light of the sun, and losing ground before him every minute. While thus engaged, she perceived a figure, or it might be figures, very obscurely moving at the very farthest corner to which the temporary buildings reached, which was exactly where the dark shade of the large forest-trees and underwood surrounding the garden touched the verge of the lawn. This spot, as seen from the window where Mademoiselle de Cordillac stood, would have been but dimly visible even at noon-day ; for not only was it thickly planted with evergreen shrubs, but the canvass or boarding of the festive edifice appeared at that point to project into what seemed an irregular sort of porch, or garden exit from the rooms. Seen, therefore, by the grey uncertain light of the morning,

rather marred than mended by the gleams proceeding from the illuminations within, it was quite impossible for her to distinguish whether the moving mass she saw were man, woman, or both. But she looked not the less earnestly for that. Woman-like, the less she could make out what she saw, the more eagerly she gazed at it; and while standing thus with her head advanced through the open window, she caught a sound, evidently proceeding from the spot at which she gazed, yet so indistinct, considering the vicinity, that she felt certain the person who uttered it must be muffled by some very close envelopement.

With a quick and almost instinctive movement she turned round and extinguished the light which stood on a table near her, and then resuming her position, gazed with very nervous excitement upon the misty scene below. She again heard the same indistinct sound, which was more than once repeated before it ceased entirely; but the moving object she had seen was no longer visible, and she was about to withdraw and shut the window, when a sudden gleam of brilliant light shot from the porch she

had before remarked, and while it lasted she clearly discerned the figure of a tall man pass out. But the flash was so instantaneous, and the dimness which succeeded appeared so much greater than before, that the moment the door or curtain through which it had been emitted closed, she was unable to distinguish any object whatever.

By degrees, however, as the effect of this contrast between strong light and comparative darkness subsided, Adèle again distinguished the trees and shrubs, and even the garden path which wound away amongst them ; but nothing living or moving remained in sight, and she stood puzzled, frightened, and uncertain whether she ought to give notice of the baffled cry which she believed she had heard, or whether the whole thing might not have arisen from some affair of gallantry into which she would not be wise to penetrate.

The moment this idea struck her, it was followed by the recollection of the words she had heard spoken by her step-father as Count Romanhoff led her to the supper-room.— “Ruperto, manage this matter for me skilfully,

and the price shall be doubled." Neither was the explanatory phrase, "I adore her!" forgotten; and the deeply-distressed Adèle felt convinced that what she had just witnessed was the result of this conversation.

It was more from being lost in very disagreeable reverie than from the expectation or the wish of seeing any thing more that she still retained her position near the window; and just as a feeling of chilliness roused her to the consciousness that it would be better to close the *croisée*, and retire to bed, she again perceived a tall moving figure near the garden entrance to the temporary buildings, which immediately disappeared within it; while, as it entered, another short flash of the artificial day within made the gloom which succeeded wear the appearance of almost total darkness.

Adèle shut the window, drew a curtain over it, and threw herself, shivering and painfully agitated, on the bed. But sleep was now perfectly out of the question. The mission of Roger, and the adventure of which she had just been a spectator, would either of them have been sufficient to make her wakeful; but,

together, they caused a degree of nervous agitation and excitement as new to her as it was miserable.

Till the latter occurred, the former, though agitating, had in it a mixture of hope that made her heart bound, even while she trembled at her own temerity; but the latter had thrown a weight upon her spirits, which made her see every thing *en noir*. Fear, and a feeling approaching to self-condemnation, took the place of hope, and she would have given worlds that she had submitted to the desertion of her lover, without having made what now seemed to her so very improper an effort to bring him back. The solitude she had so longed for seemed terrible to her: she fancied that she should have felt less miserable in the ball-room; accused herself of unkindness to Sabina and rudeness to the guests, for having withdrawn; and then tormented herself by sketching in vivid colours the embarrassment and distress she should have to endure when she next found herself in the presence of her step-father. The terms of affectionate and pleasant intimacy on which they had always lived,—the absence

of every sort of suspicion of a similar nature during his past life, and his gay habit of challenging every expression on her countenance or that of Sabina, which might chance to be less cheerful than ordinary,—all pressed upon her, and made her dread the meeting. And still the music and the dance went on below, sending up at intervals a sort of joyous swell of sound that seemed to mock her sadness.

At length, however, this ceased, and, by degrees, stillness and silence succeeded to incessant movement and incessant noise. It was a relief: but still Adèle was certain that she should not sleep; and greatly did she long, while listening for the light step of Sabina, who must pass her room in going to her own, to open her door, and invite her to enter. Had all the weight which rested upon her mind been of an ordinary character,—if, even, it had related only to her own too-decisive measures respecting Mr. Coventry, it is probable she would have yielded to the temptation that the sound of Sabina's step, at length distinctly heard, brought with it, and would have sprung to the door to let her in. But she would not

have mentioned the adventure of the garden to her for the universe, as, with the explanation which must have followed, it would have presented her father before her eyes in a manner so degrading and so painful, as she well knew would make her completely wretched.

Resolutely, therefore, did she determine to bear all this alone; and, breathing a prayer that the dear Sabina's eyes might soon close in the refreshing sleep of peace and ignorance, she turned herself upon her restless pillow, and was speedily rewarded for the sisterly self-denial, by herself dropping into profound repose in less than ten minutes afterwards, and even while she was (in spite of her earnest endeavours to do no such thing) tormenting herself to discover who the object of Mr. Hargrave's unholy adoration could possibly be.

CHAPTER II.

THE sleep of poor Adèle, sound as it was, did not last long ; for, being gifted with a pair of those inconvenient ears which seem to wake while all else sleeps, she was startled, after the interval of an hour or so, by a sound which seemed to be immediately below her windows. She got up, and partially withdrew the curtain. It was now broad daylight, though the lofty walls, and thick but still leafless trees of the garden, threw a deep shadow over the part of the enclosure which surrounded the canvass-covered exterior of the last night's fairy palaces. But this shadow, deep as it was, could not now conceal the objects which it fell upon, as it had done an hour or two before ; and if any doubt remained on the mind of Mademoiselle de Cor-

dillac as to who might have been the tall personage whom she had dimly discerned go out and go in during that obscurity, it was now removed, for she perceived Mr. Hargrave come forth from under what now appeared to be a heavy mass of canvass, seemingly drawn up in the manner of a curtain, and (carrying some implement in his hand which she could not very plainly distinguish) take his way rapidly, but very stilly, round the corner of the new erections, which then concealed him from her sight.

Almost instinctively she replaced the curtain of her window, for she felt certain he would return, because she knew that there was no outlet from the garden in that direction. But, though nervously anxious to be herself invisible, she could not resist the movement which led her to watch for the return she expected; and, carefully shielded by the drapery of her window-curtain, she managed easily so to adjust her eye as to see while remaining perfectly unseen. She had not waited long in this position before she perceived Mr. Hargrave return again to this opening from the

garden rooms, and enter by it. He carried in his hand what appeared to be a large silk pocket handkerchief, such as he was in the habit of using ; but now it was tied into a sort of pendant bundle, and evidently, from the shape in which it hung from his hand, contained something weighty, though not large. The implement which he had carried when he passed out had been left in the garden, for the handkerchief above described was all that occupied his left hand, while the right remained at liberty, and was employed to assist his entrance by pushing aside the heavy canvass by which he passed.

Greatly did Adèle rejoice at the precautions she had taken for concealment, for just before her mysterious step-father disappeared within the drapery, he paused for an instant, and looking up towards the house appeared to reconnoitre its windows with a scrutinising and anxious glance.

Nothing could be much more tormentingly vague, or painfully puzzling, than the state of mind in which this act of *espionnage* left poor Adèle. Whatever might be the meaning of

what she had seen, she regretted most deeply having witnessed it. A malicious sort of fatality seemed to have attended her throughout the night, which had just let her sufficiently into Mr. Hargrave's secrets to make her feel herself in some sort a spy upon him, yet leaving her, despite all the strange things she had heard and seen, most completely in the dark as to what had actually happened. If, as she could not reasonably doubt, the stifled cry she had heard proceeded from the person Mr. Hargrave professed to adore, how came it that, so speedily after her forcible abduction, he could be occupied so strangely, as to time and place, upon some mysterious business with which it seemed impossible that this lady could have any concern? She could not have been mistaken as to the identity of the person who had spoken the words she had heard on her way to the supper-room; neither could there be any doubt as to who it was that had been collecting in the shrubbery a handkerchief-full of something or other at seven o'clock in the morning, after an entertainment which could not have permitted him to retire to rest before

five. All this was certain — and her step-father was the hero of both these incongruous adventures. It was, indeed, possible that she had been mistaken as to the tall figure she had so dimly seen in the garden in the interval between the first and last; yet, while allowing this possibility, it had no effect upon her mind, and she felt little less certain of having seen Mr. Hargrave then than upon either the former or the latter occasion.

With her heart beating, her head aching, and her ear nervously on the alert to catch every sound, she had seated herself, cold and miserable enough, in the easy chair which stood at the foot of her bed, and presently heard the door of the library, which opened at a few yards' distance into the same passage as her own, cautiously closed, and the roused and anxious sense even caught the sound of the bolt by which it was secured within.

Alas ! how truly might she have exclaimed with Cato, “I’m weary of conjecture !” Weary she was, indeed, but with that weariness that leads to restlessness, and not to repose. She looked again at the time-piece on

her chimney; it seemed to have stood still since she had looked before. It was still but twenty minutes past seven, and there could be little hope of hearing any servant stirring after such a night for the next two hours. Roger, indeed It was just possible that the active old man, who was ever the first of the household to be stirring, might not have gone to bed after executing her commission. How *she* longed, as this possibility occurred, to leave her room and penetrate to the offices, where, perhaps, she might find her venerable messenger refreshing himself snugly after his expedition, and thus learn, before any ear was awake, save his own, to listen to her inquiries, what had been the result of his embassy.

So strong was this longing at her heart that she would probably have braved the closed windows and expiring lamps in order to gratify it, had it not been that she must have passed the library. Almost equally unwilling to be seen herself in the performance of the errand she had meditated, or to let her step-father suspect that she might by possibility have seen him, she abandoned the project, and de-

terminated to wait with all the patience she could for such a general movement among the household as might prevent the opening of her own door from being remarkable.

But what should she do meanwhile? Read? No apartment belonging to Adèle de Cordillac could be unprovided with books; and there, in truth, they stood in goodly rows before her. But had they been made of wood, they would have been fully as interesting to her at that moment; and she shook her head as she remembered the fallacious line about

“ Books, those silent friends that *ever* please.”

She would much more willingly have set herself to *parfiller* her silken coverlet than have attempted to exchange the wandering, wavering, vague, and tormenting thoughts which filled her mind, for the most glorious speculations or beautiful fancies that ever beamed upon mortals from the empyrean heights of poetry. No! reading was out of the question,—she perfectly loathed the thought of it; but after sitting for the space of about ten minutes,

waiting for sounds which she did not expect to hear for two hours, she felt that she could not bear it, and suddenly determined to dress herself, as she had undressed herself, without the aid of her maid, to eke out this operation as long as she possibly could, and when it was completed, to try her endurance again for as long a time as it would serve her: after which, if needs must, she thought she might brave the chance of being detected as the first person awake in the house, and venture to pass through her own door, and before that of Mr. Hargrave, in quest of Roger.

Considerably relieved by having thus sketched her plan of operations, Adèle began her toilet. Having once more tightened the long tresses of her luxuriant hair, till that richest of decorations, withdrawn in all directions from her beautiful face, looked, in its classic simplicity, like a dark casque upon a bust of alabaster, she indulged in that most rousing and refreshing of all ablutions the immersion of the face in cold water. Again and again was this repeated, and each time she arose, like Antæus from the earth, or (a closer resem-

blance) like Venus from the wave, braced and revivified by the contact.

There be many reasoners, besides female ones, who are apt to jump to a conclusion; and had any such watched the rekindling hope and spirit of Adèle's eye, as her nerves thus recovered their tone, he might have been tempted to declare that he found in it a convincing proof of the materiality of the fair creature before him, and that it was not necessary any spiritual essence should mix itself in such a frame in order to render it perfect; for that it was as clear as light, "the body thought." It was but a proof the more, however, that it was "divinely wrought;" and, in all respects, a most fitting tabernacle for the holy light that dwelt within.

Conscious of the healthful influence, and thankful for it, Adèle knelt, and prayed to God to give her strength to endure with firmness and resignation whatever awaited her. And then, no longer so childishly restless or so unwisely impatient, she seated herself to perform that most difficult operation of the female toilet (and the only one, perhaps, in

which a young girl really wants assistance), namely, the brushing, with arm vainly extended to its utmost length, the abounding mass of silk that, released from all restraint, now flowed around her. The task was new, and Adèle was certainly awkward at it; for ere her uplifted arm had twice repeated the necessary effort, the treacherous implement flew from her grasp, and struck with rebellious violence against the corner of her table.

The noise occasioned by this unfortunate concussion was, as she instantly felt, ten times more startling than any she would have been likely to produce had she yielded to her wish of leaving the room; and she sat in trembling expectation that some symptom would reach her of its having been heard by other ears than her own. Nor had she long to wait for a confirmation of this very painful fear, for, in the next moment, she heard the bolt of the library door withdrawn, the lock turned, and then a step, which distinctly approached her door.

Adèle trembled from head to foot; but the prayer she had just uttered seemed to return

to her own bosom ; and remembering that she was, in truth, engaged in no unlawful act, her courage rallied, and she remained quietly waiting for what should happen next.

The sound she expected followed. A gentle knock was heard upon her door, and she immediately rose and opened it. Adèle certainly was not surprised at seeing Mr. Hargrave, for, in fact, she would have been greatly surprised had she seen any one else ; and yet she started, for she had not expected to see him look so ill. It is probable that, though at least as much a watcher as Adèle herself, he had not as yet had recourse to either of the restoratives she had employed. In other words, that he had neither breathed a prayer nor washed his face ; for he looked haggard, pale, and agitated.

The beautiful composure of her countenance, however, seemed in some degree to restore him ; for he smiled, and said, in a voice not quite steady, but of perfect gentleness,—

“ You are up, then, my dearest Adèle ? I was afraid I heard you. What makes you leave your bed, my dear child, after so late a party ? I trust you are not ill ? ”

“ Oh dear, no, papa !” she replied, inexpressibly glad that the first words were spoken. “ I am perfectly well. Only, being wide awake, and seeing the sun shine so brightly, I got up without much considering what o’clock it was.”

“ Not yet eight, Adèle : no servant, as I take it, can be moving yet,” replied Mr. Hargrave. And he then added, after the interval of a moment, during which he looked in her face with an earnestness that was painful, “ What has made you so restless, Adèle ? Have any sounds disturbed you during the night ?”

But before she could answer this he spoke again ; and she was equally relieved and surprised by his saying,—

“ I feared, indeed, that this would be the case ; for after you retired last night, circumstances occurred which, for some time, led to great confusion, both in the house and out of it.”

“ And what was that, papa ?” she said, with quickness, anxious both to receive his answer and to avoid making any herself.

“ Nay, my dear child,” he replied, yawning

violently, “for all that I must refer you to Sabina, who was herself a witness to the painful scene; for, unfortunately, tired as I am, it is necessary that I should finish a sort of *procès verbal*, which I promised to write before I closed my eyes; and I give you my honour I can hardly keep them open. Go, therefore, to your sister, my love, as soon as you hear she is awake, and she will tell you quite as much about this disagreeable business as I could do.”

Inexpressibly comforted by these words, and readily persuaded that all her foregone conclusions were wrong, Adèle replied, with even more than her usual affectionate sweetness of manner,—

“ Go—go, dearest papa; do not let me detain you a moment longer! Make haste to get through what you have to do, and lay down for a few hours, or I am quite sure you will make yourself ill.”

Mr. Hargrave smiled affectionately, kissed her cheek, told her he should most strictly follow her advice, and then added,—

“ I wish you would also follow mine, dear

child. Darken your room, Adèle, and endeavour to take another nap."

Adèle escaped replying to this by returning his caress, and then waved her hand in token of her anxiety that he should lose no more time in talking to her.

"God bless you, dearest!" he said, in a tone which shewed that he too was glad to be released ; and then kissing his finger-tops with a touch of his ordinary gay and gallant bearing, he returned to the library.

Once more alone, Adèle returned thanks to Heaven that, though all she had witnessed was still involved in mystery, she was relieved from her worst fears concerning her father's share in it. It is true she would much rather not have heard the words which she had connected, as it now seemed so unjustly, with what she had seen ; but she determined never to allude to the irregularity of conduct which those words betrayed to any human being,—to use her very best endeavours to forget them herself, and, above all, to conceal from Sabina all she unfortunately knew, and all she had un-

warrantably suspected concerning her beloved father.

“ And now, then,” thought Adèle, “ there can be no danger in my going down-stairs as soon as I am dressed, and endeavouring to find old Roger. It will be something new if fatigue of any kind keeps him in bed till nearly nine o’clock.”

Skilfully or not skilfully, all that remained of her dressing operations was speedily performed ; and Adèle, her heart throbbing with both hope and fear concerning the answer she might receive from Coventry, hastened to leave her room. Though undoubtedly she no longer felt the same dread of encountering Mr. Hargrave as she had done before their interview, she almost, unconsciously perhaps, wished, if possible, to pass his door unheard. Not that he could guess her secret reasons for thus wandering about the house ; he had never heard her mention the name of Alfred Coventry since the day on which the abortive invitation was sent him to meet Prince Frederic at dinner, and she had no fears whatever of his pene-

trating her secret. But she dreaded the necessity of more evasion, which was as foreign to her habits as to her principles ; and rejoicing that her door had fallen to without the lock having caught, she opened it without a sound, and noiselessly stealing over the richly-carpeted passage and staircase, reached the hall below, without having the least cause to

“ Startle at the sound herself had made.”

She then turned into an open passage which led to the offices, and knowing that she was now in a region from whence noises of many kinds might at that hour be heard without exciting attention, she walked fearlessly on to the sitting-room of the upper servants, where she fully expected to find the comfort-loving old Englishman enjoying his never-forsaken luxury of a cup of tea. But in this she was disappointed. Not only was no Roger Humphries there, but it was evident that no such notable individual had that morning entered the room, for no spark of fire was on the hearth, and no gleam of light entered it save by the door.

She had, then, to live on yet longer without knowing whether she was about to be the very happiest creature on the earth, or one of the most wretched ! What should she do now ? Return to her own cheerless chamber, and there await the summons of the tardy old man ? Her courage sunk before the idea of this anxious interval ; and, after a moment's reflection, she resolved to find her way through the lately bright, but now dark, labyrinth which led to the new buildings in the garden.

As long as the hope of immediately learning the result of Roger's embassy lasted, all curiosity respecting the mysteries of the preceding night seemed in abeyance : she had happily ascertained that her step-father had no private connexion with them ; and the subject, therefore, compared with the news she expected from her confidential servant, appeared one of the most perfect indifference. But now that perforce she must wait a while longer for the former, she felt disposed to set about investigating the latter. To Sabina she was still determined not to apply till the morning was more advanced ; but she thought

she might gain something like information by visiting the spot behind the garden rooms, from whence she had seen Mr. Hargrave return with his heavily laden pocket-handkerchief.

For this purpose she made her way by such glimmerings of light as crevices admitted to the flowery retreat, which her knowledge of the local geography had last night taught her to discover was the termination of the intricate suite: and here the bright light of the morning sun again greeted her; for the entrance she had seen used while watching the spot from her window, was still open—the canvass being suspended by a pole that had been drawn away from a large orange-tree, which it had supported.

Adèle paused to look about her. Her first feeling was that which must be common to every one who ever gazed upon the *débris* of a gala. All that under the cunning influence of tasteful arrangement, and the delusive brilliance of fictitious light, had appeared graceful and gorgeous, now looked like the wreck and remnants of a paltry world made up of paint

and pasteboard. The very flowers which, blushing beneath the glances of unnumbered tapers, had a few hours before given to this spot an air of almost supernatural beauty, now looked pale, and sick, and sorrowful !

“ What a frightful contrast ! ” murmured Adèle. “ It is a blessing that Nature manages her eventide and morn better than we do. How terrible it would be after every star-lit, moon-embellished night, were we, on awaking in the morning, to find every thing looking as dirty and dismal as our manufactured world does here ! ”

Having concluded her philosophical survey, she was about to pass into the garden, when she was struck by the evident care which had been bestowed in the construction of the building to render this place of exit both easy to use and difficult to see. She perfectly remembered the aspect which that portion of the seeming wall, which was now suspended by the pole, had presented on the preceding evening. The painting upon it represented a magnificent arch ; and two splendid orange-trees, stationed on each side of it, had assisted

to lead the eye through its well-managed perspective to an imagined world of courts and corridors beyond.

“ When I so greatly admired that arch last night,” thought Adèle, “ I certainly had no idea that it would be so easy a matter to walk under it.”

The garden, though a magnificent appendage to a metropolitan residence, was not large enough to make it difficult for Mademoiselle de Cordillac to find the exact spot to which she had seen Mr. Hargrave direct his steps the last time she had watched him quit the building in the morning ; for, in fact, the erection reached on that side to within a few feet of the surrounding wall, and the whole of the space was thickly planted. But, from the direction in which she had seen him disappear, it was quite certain that he must have passed through this narrow, and almost tangled, bit of shrubbery, though the doing so was no easy matter.

“ What could he have wanted here ? ” thought Adèle. “ He was scarcely long enough absent to have reached the space left

on the other side of the building." Wrapping her dress round her, however, she entered the little thicket, determined to make her way through it, as he must have done before her. But, ere this resolution had been tested by encountering any of the thorny obstacles it seemed to promise, her steps were arrested by the sight of a trowel, such as masons use. She stooped and took it up. Could this be the implement which she had discerned in her step-father's hand as he went out? — she thought not. She had distinctly seen what appeared to be a longer, a slenderer, and a lighter-coloured handle than that of the implement she had found, and she let it drop on the place from whence she had taken it. Before she passed on, however, she gave another glance to it as it lay upon the ground; and as she turned her eyes from it, with the conviction that it was not what she had seen in the hand of Mr. Hargrave, they were attracted by the gleaming of some bright but minute object, lying at the edge of a heap of withered leaves which seemed raked together from an abundance of others with which the

ground was covered. She moved the moist and dirty-looking mass with her foot, for its appearance was not inviting to her ungloved fingers; but this daintiness speedily vanished before what her foot disclosed; and stooping, without further ceremony, she plunged her hand into the wet mass, and drew thence a long chain of gold, the clasp of which had evidently been torn off, as well as something which had been attached to the centre, for the link from which it had hung had been wrenched asunder.

Terrified — she hardly knew why — Adèle turned about, and was hastily returning with her valuable though mutilated treasure to the house, when it occurred to her that she had but very imperfectly looked through the mass of leaves which appeared to have been collected to conceal this trinket; and stepping back she took up the trowel which lay in her path, and set about examining the heap with more care. No more gold, however, peeped out from it; but, having reached with her trowel the bottom of the mass, she clearly perceived that the ground under it had been

recently moved, and, instead of being as firm as the soil around, lay loosely raised above the surface.

Adèle's courage almost failed her. What might she discover if she removed that loosened earth? The evidence of guilt and robbery seemed before her: her step-father, perhaps, had sought such proof in vain—but it was now before her; and, with greater agitation than seemed reasonable to herself, she knelt upon the ground, and used the instrument she had found to remove the soil. There was no difficulty in the task; it lay, lighter than the moist leaves which had concealed it, over a rudely-crushed mass of trinketry, hidden at the distance only of an inch or two beneath the surface.

But this was not all: beside, or rather in the midst of this strangely bruised, but still glittering mass, lay a hammer, with a long, white, slender handle, exactly resembling that which she had seen in Mr. Hargrave's hand when he left the building.

It was not suspicion—Oh no! it could not be suspicion which for an instant sus-

pended the pulsations of her heart. "What a fool I am to be thus terrified!" she said aloud. "What is it I am afraid of?" and having thus chid the weakness that for a moment had made her feel so deadly sick, she lifted the golden fragments from the earth, and then perceived that they consisted entirely of settings, from whence gems had been violently torn. But, while gazing on these unequivocal traces of rapine and violence, and completing the theory by which she accounted for the manner of Mr. Hargrave's going and coming, her eyes suddenly became fixed and distended; the things she held dropped from her hands, and she would have fallen with them had she not seized the branch of a tree, and, resting her head against it, sustained herself till the sudden faintness had passed.

A moment before Adèle had accused herself of weakness, but now she wondered at her own strength, which enabled her to stand upright and in full possession of her senses, while convinced—perfectly, soberly convinced—that the ornaments she had just held in her hand were in many places spotted with blood!

Alas! the dreadful tale this told was but too legible. Not robbery alone, but murder had been committed on the premises, fatally laid open to the wretches who must have been lying in wait to perpetrate these fearful crimes by the frailness of the substitute for doors and windows, which the temporary buildings had supplied!

This, then, was the event to which Mr. Hargrave had alluded ; for the explanation of which she was referred to Sabina, and to which the *procès verbal* he had mentioned of course referred. It was now evident that, by some chance or other, he had been led to examine the spot where she stood, and had doubtless left it as nearly as possible in the same state in which he had found it, in order that it might be so seen and examined by the officers of justice. The hammer must have been left there in forgetfulness ; and the contents of the handkerchief? — it was impossible to explain it all, nor was it needful. She should hear every thing ere long, and hear too the name of the unfortunate victim. These thoughts were succeeded by others more personal. Most

deeply did she lament the curiosity which had led her to penetrate so far into this dreadful business; and the idea that, from having moved the articles, she might be called upon to give testimony in the cause, suggested itself with a force that perfectly dismayed her.

Had she trembled less violently, it would have been no difficult task to replace every thing exactly as she had found it; and, even as it was, she did so in all essential points, and felt no scruples of conscience interfere with her resolution of keeping her terrible adventure secret. Having completed this agitating task, poor Adèle returned to her own room, silent and unseen, with no spirits even to renew her search for Roger, and heartily hoping that, for an hour or so, Sabina might contrive to slumber, that she might avoid the necessity of speaking to any one.

CHAPTER III.

COLD, shaking, and miserable, Adèle, on reaching her chamber, wrapped a shawl about her head, and, without altering her dress, crept into bed. The sense of security and freedom from observation which this retreat produced, greatly contributed to tranquillise her ; sufficiently indeed for a salutary flood of tears to take place of the less kindly agitation she had felt before : and worn out, as it seemed, by all she had done and all she had suffered, she happily sunk to sleep, and thus became better able to endure the scenes which immediately afterwards she had to pass through.

By the time Adèle had returned to the saloon through which she re-entered the house, several servants had already made their oper-

ations audible in the offices, and it was probably under the cover of this that she again passed by the library door unchallenged ; for she no longer felt the power of measuring her tread as she had done when passing it before. But Mr. Hargrave, if he heard her, noted her not ; and her own maid, giving her credit for uninterrupted and most profound repose after the fatigues of the ball, carefully abstained from approaching her.

In order intelligibly to explain what now occurred, it will be necessary to go back to the time at which the three gentlemen who had been engaged at the whist-table with the unfortunate M. Bertrand took their departure from Mr. Hargrave's dwelling. The coachmen of two of these gentlemen had drawn up their carriages round the corner of the wall which surrounded the court-yard ; the equipage of Lord Hartwell was in the court, and he immediately drove off, but the other two walked out together in the direction one of the servants of the house pointed out. Just as they came in sight of their carriages, but before they had well quitted the *porte-cochère*, they

both together perceived a man closely buttoned up in a great-coat who appeared to be approaching with intent to enter by a small *porte de service* at one corner of the courtyard. No sooner, however, did he perceive them and the servant who was still attending them from the house, than he suddenly turned about and retreated at a rapid pace, till he reached the opening of a narrow passage on the opposite side of the way, through which he disappeared.

“Who is that, I wonder?” said M. de Soissons, addressing the domestic.

“I should have said it was our young ladies’ favourite old footman, Roger,” replied the man, “if I didn’t know that it was quite unlikely.”

“Unlikely or not,” said M. de Beauvet, “it is perfectly necessary we should question him a little;” and, without waiting for any reply, he darted across the street, and immediately disappeared down the passage.

“But we must follow him, my friend,” said M. de Sissons to the servant. “You have heard what has happened, have you not? *Allons! C'est un brave homme ce Monsieur*

Beauvet, and we must not let him be murdered all alone."

Perfectly of the same opinion, the domestic of Mr. Hargrave joined the chase, and in a very few moments they all overtook the person who was so evidently endeavouring to avoid them.

" Holla ! " exclaimed M. de Beauvet ; " whither so fast, and why so shy, good man ? "

The hunted man gave a look over his shoulder, and apparently perceiving that there was no hope of escape, deliberately turned round, and, touching his hat, said very respectfully, " Have you any business with me, gentlemen ? "

" Business, my good friend ? Oh dear, no ; no business in the world ! " returned M. de Soissons ; " purely a matter of pleasure and amusement, to which so civil a gentleman as you seem to be cannot refuse to contribute. Have the kindness, monsieur, to tell us why you happened to take fright at the sight of us ? And why you so disobligingly turned your back upon us and fled ? "

" Fled, gentlemen ! " said old Roger, for the

fugitive was no other ; “ I have no cause to fly from any one. What may be your pleasure with me ? ”

Now Roger, being a man of some talent and more ambition, with high wages and little work, had not passed twenty years in the capital of *la grande nation* without having learned its language ; he *had* learned it much more thoroughly than men of his station generally do, and spoke it with facility and very tolerable correctness. But now he made sad work of it ; and, in fact, shewed in all ways such unequivocal symptoms of agitation, that his fellow-servant stared at him with astonishment, and the two strangers with undisguised suspicion.

“ There is little occasion, I suspect,” said M. de Beauvet, “ to explain to you what has been going on to-night in the house we saw you entering when the sight of honest men made you take in such haste to your heels ; it is enough to tell you that you are shrewdly suspected to have had a hand in it, and, therefore, by your leave, old gentleman, I thus make you my prisoner.”

The words were accompanied by the most appropriate action possible, for as he pronounced the last member of the sentence he laid violent hands on poor Roger's collar, and, by the help of M. de Soissons, who at the same moment committed a like ungenteel assault upon his heels, lodged him in one of the carriages which had now drawn up to the spot where they stood.

Much less alarmed at this violent proceeding than he would have been by a few civil questions as to whence he came and wherefore he had gone, old Roger suffered himself to be deposited in the carriage of M. le Comte de Beauvet without any resistance, his only symptom of contumacy being a rigorous silence.

"This fellow wears your master's livery," said M. de Beauvet, addressing the servant who attended them from the house. "Has he a right to do so? or is it only put on for purposes of fraud?"

"He has a right to wear my master's livery," replied the man, "at least till such time as it is taken off his back; and that, as I take it, will be before he is much older. With such

goings on as we have heard of to-night, it is not very easy to mistake as to what kept the old rogue out of his bed, or what made him run away in such a hurry when he caught sight of your honours."

Short of the feeling which exasperated the Moor against the harmless Cassio, it was hardly possible that stronger hatred could exist in the heart of any uninjured man against a fellow-creature than that which animated the bosom of Louis Querin against Roger Humphies.

The causes which led to this were scarcely of sufficient dignity to be recorded; but the contemptible nature of the impulse did not render its effect less strong. Querin was a Frenchman,—young, tall, with black *favoris* that might have served for the mane of a pony; and black eyes, large, bright, and bold, which in his soul he believed were not only the finest eyes in Christendom, but of a beauty which might fairly entitle him to compete with the noblest heroes in court or camp as *un homme à bonnes fortunes*. He had, perhaps, amidst the shining vicissitudes of *la jeune France* encoun-

tered adventures which had served to nourish his prodigious vanity up to the enormous growth at which it now flourished ; but, whatever the cause, it is certain that in his vocation of serving-man he never by any chance waited upon a lady, let her character and quality be what it might, without expecting to be treated in some way or other as a favourite. When impudent vanity is of as vigorous a stamina as that of M. Louis Querin, every thing that can by possibility be converted into nourishment will act as such ; and without intending the slightest reflection upon the discretion of any of the various ladies he had previously served, it is not to be denied that when he entered the service of Mr. Hargrave he anticipated considerably more favour than he found. His appearance and deportment being exactly what Mr. Hargrave himself approved in that portion of his establishment retained for show, he was permitted to continue in it, although both the young ladies of the family happened very particularly to dislike him. That such should be the case was a thing so difficult of belief to the mind of Louis Querin, that it is probable no-

thing would have made him receive it as true, but the marked favour and even familiarity of both Mademoiselle Hargrave and Mademoiselle de Cordillac towards Roger Humphries. That a fellow, old, ugly, and (stranger than all !) AN ENGLISHMAN, should be preferred as a personal attendant upon ladies (by the ladies themselves), had something so monstrous, preposterous, and unnatural in it, that the acute M. Louis was driven to meditate very profoundly on the cause ; and soon convinced himself that it arose from the *espionnage*, reports, and general ill offices of the said Roger, for the which he hated him with very cordial abhorrence.

So much is necessary to explain the conduct of this very worthless individual in the transactions which followed.

“ *Ecoutez, mon enfant !* ” said M. de Beauvet, as he proposed to enter the carriage in which he had lodged his prisoner. “ Go back to the house and go to bed without saying a single syllable about our having caught this very suspicious-looking old fellow. Doubtless he has confederates, and the purposes of justice

might be defeated by their being informed of his capture. You will be sure to hear of us in an hour or two, as we shall require your evidence respecting the manner in which we found and secured him."

Louis received these instructions with an air of respectful deference, and punctually obeyed them.

* * * * *

It was nearly noon when Mademoiselle Agatha, the *femme de chambre* of Sabina, gently approached the bed of Adèle to reconnoitre whether she slept or not. But the noise she made, however slight, sufficed to awaken Mademoiselle de Cordillac, who, starting up, astonished the Abigail by shewing that, though found in bed and fast asleep, she was completely dressed.

"*Mais, mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle has been up already! and, it may be, has been waiting for her breakfast?"

"No, no, I have not wanted breakfast. Is my sister up?"

"*Mais oui, mademoiselle,* and dying to see

you. Ah ! such an adventure ! And mademoiselle knows nothing of it ? ”

“ I suppose Sabina is in the boudoir ? ” returned Adèle, leaving her bed and making some hasty reparation of her toilet.

“ Shall I send Susanna, mademoiselle ? or will you give me leave ? ” said the girl, offering to assist her.

“ I am quite ready, thank you, Agatha ; ” and with a step lighter than her heart Adèle hurried to the boudoir.

“ Oh, Adèle, how ill you look ! ” were the first words with which her sister greeted her. “ I had hoped, dearest, that your quiet and, comparatively speaking, long night, would have made you fitter to hear what I have got to tell than you now seem to be. Are you ill, dear Adèle ? ”

“ No, Sabina, not ill ; but most exceedingly curious to learn what it is Agatha has been talking about.”

“ Then you have heard it ? ” said Sabina.
“ Is it not dreadful ? ”

“ I have heard nothing, ” replied Adèle ;

"excepting that you have something terrible to tell me. Let me know what it is, I beseech you."

Sabina then related the scene which had taken place in the hall on the preceding night, and described in lively colours the agony of poor M. Bertrand. "I cannot help thinking," she said, "that they must have been mutually attached, his words and manner had so much the appearance of true affection."

"And have no tidings been yet heard of her?" demanded the trembling Adèle.

"Nothing, as Agatha tells me, has been learned beyond the frightfully alarming fact of her disappearance, excepting that the canvass walls of the temporary rooms in the garden have been broken through, and the door on the east side of the garden, leading, you know, into the narrow passage that goes to the stables, was found open: both of which circumstances indicate with sufficient clearness the manner in which this dreadful deed was effected."

"How?" cried Adèle, almost gasping; "Were there any traces—any marks?"

“No traces, you know, could be more legible,” replied Sabina, “than those furnished by the open passage through which she must have been carried. Never, surely, was so daring an attempt perpetrated. It must have been effected under cover of the noise and bustle of that horrible cotillon; yet papa says that he thinks he saw her dancing in it.”

“Where was papa during the cotillon?” demanded Adèle.

“Dancing,” replied Sabina. “He danced the cotillon with Mademoiselle de Charmonte.”

“Did he dance the whole of it?” asked Adèle, remembering the long interval which had elapsed after the well-known notes of the cotillon first reached her, and before she saw the tall figure re-enter, whom at one period during the vacillating meditations of that eventful night she had believed to be Mr. Hargrave.

“No, not the whole of it,” replied Sabina. “I particularly remember seeing him come in from the garden-rooms after the first two or three figures were over. I remember it because I noticed that he looked exceedingly ill and

tired. But, nevertheless, he immediately began dancing, and exerted himself wonderfully, for I observed afterwards that I never saw him appear in greater spirits. He positively seemed to be dancing with a dozen ladies, besides his own partner; and, therefore, I have no doubt that he really did see poor Madame Bertrand dancing—for he seemed too much on the *qui vive* not to know every body."

Adèle pressed her hand to her forehead and remained silent.

" You should take some coffee, my dearest Adèle. The breakfast is getting cold while we talk, and I am sure you look as if you had need of it," said Sabina, placing before her a cup of the fragrant beverage she recommended; and then setting her the example of applying to the breakfast-table for support under the anxiety that had fallen upon them.

Adèle endeavoured to follow it—she endeavoured to rally, she endeavoured to talk—but thoughts, wildly improbable, yet frightfully harassing, had taken possession of her mind; and though her judgment rejected them, it was totally beyond her power to

shake them off. Why had Mr. Hargrave said that he had seen Madame Bertrand dancing? Why was she still, in defiance of all probability, in defiance of her most ardent wishes — why was she still so strangely disposed to believe that the tall figure she had distinctly seen leave the building and return to it some twenty minutes or half-hour afterwards (but still before there was light sufficient to distinguish him) — why did she, against her utmost efforts to prevent it, cling to the renewed belief that this tall figure and the one she had so perfectly distinguished go and return afterwards were the same? The coincidence of time; the fact that he had entered the ball-room considerably after the cotillon had begun; that he looked ill; that he had danced with such unusual vehemence of animation; and, lastly, that he had stated his belief of Madame Bertrand having been engaged in the same dance, although the cry she had heard so fearfully proved the contrary, all pressed together upon her memory, and made her feel as if her senses were leaving her.

But the more these hateful suspicions settled upon her mind, the more earnest became her wish to conceal them completely and for ever from Sabina. She knew the tender devotion of her attachment to this mysterious father, and she felt that either her life or her reason would probably be the sacrifice were she to know that such thoughts had ever been conceived concerning him. But Sabina's eye was upon her, and she feared that she should sink before it. There was one way, and one only that suggested itself, by which such a turn might be given to their conversation as might account for her own weakness without disclosing the real cause of it. Adèle related with as much distinctness as was in her power all that Count Romanhoff had said to her, and the sudden resolution of sending to Coventry, which had been its result.

Sabina listened to her with the most earnest attention, and evidently with more sympathy and emotion than the elopement of Madame Bertrand had caused her.

“ My sweetest Adèle ! ” she said, “ is it this that makes your dear eyes look so unlike themselves ? Believe me, Adèle, you have

done nothing but what was perfectly right. Had any weak, feminine punctilio prevented your doing that excellent young man justice, I should never have forgiven you. But the answer, dearest? Old Roger, despite the deliberation of his movement, might have traversed the distance half-a-dozen times since I saw you creep out of the supper-room. What was the answer?"

"I do not know," said Adèle.

"Not know? Do you mean that you have not seen your messenger? Adèle! this weakness is unworthy of you," said Sabina, eagerly ringing the bell. "To think of your permitting any scruples whatever to prevent your inquiring into circumstances on which the whole fate of your life depends!"

Adèle replied not, and her sister felt little wonder at seeing her lay her arms on the table and bury her face upon them. It was quite natural, she thought, that her emotions should overpower her at the moment of receiving an answer to such an embassy.

"Send Roger here!" she said to the servant who answered the bell.

"I do not think he is in the house, made-

moiselle," replied the man ; " for we could not find him when he was wanted for his breakfast."

" At what hour was that ?" inquired Sabina.

" At eight usually, mademoiselle ; but at nine to-day."

" Not at home at nine !" repeated Sabina, her fair brow contracting with a look of vexation. " Go, Justin, and look for him again ; and, as soon as he comes home, send him here."

" How very strange this is !" exclaimed Sabina, as soon as they were again alone. " The old man must know pretty nearly as well as I do, Adèle, that this errand was no common one. Coventry could not have detained him for seven or eight hours. I cannot understand it."

" It is very strange that he should not be come back," said Adèle, looking up at her, with an expression in her eyes which Sabina could not understand. Had it been possible that the person who had despatched such a note as her sister had repeated to her could be indifferent as to the answer to it, Sabina would have thought, from that glance, that Adèle

was positively thinking of something else. But this was *not* possible; and the affectionate girl, feeling terrified at an expression in the dear familiar features which she was not able to interpret, got up, and seating herself close beside her, threw an arm about her neck, and kissed her fondly.

“ I shall believe myself the wiser woman of the two, presently, Adèle,” she said; “ and that is an honour and glory that I do not want just now, for——”

“ Hark !” cried Adèle. “ What noise was that ?” and she started so violently, that the arm which embraced her fell, and the eyes of the two sisters met, as they had never met before, without a single spark of reciprocal feeling being exchanged. Adèle was not thinking of Sabina,—she was not thinking of Roger, or of his mission,—she was not thinking of Coventry: her shaken and bewildered spirit was wandering in the garden,—stealing into the retirement of her step-father’s library,—prowling about the blood-stained hoard that lay buried in the earth, and all this, with such feverish intensity of imagination, that she was

very nearly unconscious as to where she was or who was her companion.

“ Surely, dearest love,” said the frightened Sabina, “ the mere circumstance of old Roger’s delay ought not to affect you thus violently. May he not have been too late, and, finding that Coventry was gone, have set off in pursuit of him, rather than return without delivering your note ? I assure you, Adèle, I should not be at all surprised : Roger Humphries is quite capable of this sort of *dénouément*.”

“ No, he is *not* capable of it ! ” returned poor Adèle, answering to her own thoughts, yet catching at the words which reached her ear. “ Why should I torment myself by believing it when I know it is impossible ? ”

Inexpressibly shocked at a tone and manner which evinced so much deeper suffering than she thought reasonable, Sabina remained silently gazing on the face of her sister, as if to find there an explanation of what was passing within. Adèle caught her eye thus fixed upon her, and winced under the examination. “ Why do you look at me so, Sabina ? ” she said : “ it is not kind of you.”

“ Oh Adèle! do not say that — do not say I am unkind, when I would give my right hand to tranquillise and comfort you !”

The accent in which this was uttered went straight to the heart of the agitated and bewildered girl, and did her a world of good, for it once more brought a flood of tears to her eyes ; the strain upon her mind seemed relaxed, and recovering her self-command and awaking anew to the feeling that her first duty, let what would ensue, was to guard the peace of the innocent Sabina, she roused herself strenuously and effectually from the frightful reverie into which she had fallen, and gave herself sufficiently to the theme to which her dear companion again recurred (and which even then had some interest for her), to listen to her arguments concerning the non-appearance of her messenger, and at length to adopt the interpretation of it, believing, with as much concern as she could at that moment bestow on any subject (but one), that the intemperate zeal of the old man had really induced him to follow Mr. Coventry from Paris.

No theme could be more favourable for the

object which at that moment was the most important in the world to Adèle, namely, the keeping the mind of her sister from Madame Bertrand, and all the horrible circumstances which she too well knew had attended the "*elopement*," of which she now spoke so lightly; and after this followed another, to which, for the same reason, as well as for many others, Adèle listened with deep attention,—for it concerned Prince Frederic, and the conversation which had passed between him and Sabina at the supper-table. This supper-conversation, had it not been for its conclusion, would, as the blushing girl frankly allowed, have appeared to her the most delightful she had ever listened to, for it was full of the most flattering, yet ingenious expressions of admiration, esteem, and warm regard. "But it ended," said Sabina, while a tear trembled on her eyelid,—"it ended by his telling me, that he feared his *fête* upon the 1st of May would be the last and only one on which he should have the happiness of again seeing me, as it was his intention to leave Paris the day after. Do not think me foolishly vain, dear Adèle," she added,

with a glowing cheek and a smile that battled vainly with her falling tears ; “ but I do think that, had he been something less than royal, he might have loved me.”

“ And you, Sabina, what do you feel for him ? ” said her sister, anxiously.

“ That had he been less than royal, I could have loved him too,” replied Sabina firmly, and as if she felt that she had no cause to blush for the sentiment she thus frankly expressed.

“ Thank God he is leaving Paris ! ” exclaimed Adèle fervently, while her clasped hands and eyes raised to heaven seemed to shew that she was in truth deeply thankful for the news.

“ Surely, surely, Adèle, this thankfulness for his departure is unnecessary,” said Sabina gravely. “ I think you do me less than justice, sister.”

Thankful that she was not understood, the trembling Adèle only shook her head, and for a moment Sabina interpreted the silence that followed unkindly. But in the next, her gentle, sweet, and reasonable nature told her that she too ought to be thankful for this wise departure, which might spare lengthened misery to more

heads than one ; and in this tone they chatted on, with no interruption from Madame de Hautriveau, who rarely left her own apartments till the first easy toilet of a Frenchwoman had been exchanged for that, less rapidly completed, in which she better liked to meet the “garish eye of day.”

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE this long conversation took place in the boudoir of the sisters, a very different scene was passing in a different part of the house.

Mr. Hargrave, having shaved, dressed, and satisfied himself by consulting his glass, with even more attention than usual, that he looked very nearly as he wished to do, sat down to the solitary cup of coffee which constituted his first refreshment, *le grand déjeûné* at which he met the ladies of his family in the dining-room never being served before two o'clock.

Whilst thus engaged, the well-known knock of Mr. Jenkyns was heard at the door, and upon the permission to enter being given, that important functionary made his appearance,

followed by M. Jules Marsan. As this visit was not unexpected, or unprepared for, it was graciously received ; M. Marsan was requested to sit down and Mr. Jenkyns dismissed.

Whatever was the business transacted, it did not take long ; the bell was rung, the well-pleased Jules committed to the hospitable care of the steward, and Mr. Hargrave once more left alone.

Scarcely, however, had he tasted the enjoyment of the lounging leisure which he was preparing for himself upon the sofa, when he was again interrupted by a knocking at the door of the library, and again, but much more reluctantly than before, he pronounced, “Come in.” It was not now his confidential tormentor, Mr. Jenkyns, who appeared as the door opened, but the much more elegant and animated Louis Querin.

“*Pardon, monsieur,*” he began, “*mais il faut vous annoncer —*”

“Announce nothing now, Louis,” exclaimed Mr. Hargrave, yawning, “for I am tired to death.”

“*Pardon, monsieur !*” interrupted Louis,

“mais il faut —” and ere he could finish the sentence, M. de Beauvet and M. de Soissons passed by him, entering the room with little of ceremony, but with an air of busy eagerness that considerably hightened the complexion of the gentleman they came to visit.

“We must beg ten thousand pardons for breaking in upon you so early, Mr. Hargrave, after a night of so much harassing fatigue,” said M. de Beauvet, “but circumstances have occurred which make it absolutely necessary we should consult you. I am extremely sorry to say that it has become my painful duty to announce to you that suspicions of the most serious nature attach to an individual of this family respecting the lamentable occurrence of last night.”

“What do you mean, sir?” said Mr. Hargrave, fiercely.

“*Mon cher monsieur,*” said M. de Soissons, in the most conciliating tone possible, “I trust that the endeavours we have used to throw light upon the terrible transactions of last night will not be misunderstood by you as shewing any wish to interfere with what does not con-

cern us. Neither M. de Beauvet nor myself would willingly lay ourselves open to such an imputation ; but you must be aware that after witnessing the agony of the unfortunate M. Bertrand, as displayed in your hall last night, it was impossible for any one possessed of common humanity not to feel interested in his sufferings and disposed to do every thing possible to discover the offenders. It so happens, I am sorry to say, that accident has led us to the discovery of circumstances which tend very strongly to criminate one of this family. But surely, my dear sir, you would rather wish to promote the inquiries which these circumstances have led to than to check them ?”

“ Of course, sir,—of course,” replied Mr. Hargrave, whose complexion was now of the most leaden paleness. “ Pray be seated. I shall rejoice,—deeply rejoice, if any traces can be found which may lead to discovery. Have the kindness to tell me to what you allude ?”

M. de Soissons made a sign to indicate that he wished his companion to undertake the task of narration ; and, accordingly, M. de Beauvet gave a clear and succinct account of

their meeting with Roger, and then proceeded as follows :—

“ Having secured the old man, who persevered rigidly in maintaining the most obstinate and contumacious silence to all the questions addressed to him, we lodged him at the *corps de garde* till the hour at which the proper authorities should be ready to receive us. Monsieur de Soissons and myself attended the examination ; and, I am sorry to tell you, that the authorities consider it necessary to detain your servant in custody till the premises have been completely examined, and till he has given such an account of himself as may be deemed satisfactory.”

“ Roger Humphries !” said Mr. Hargrave, when the narrative was finished : “ Roger Humphries !” These were the only words he uttered, and, as he repeated them, his tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of his mouth.

“ I grieve to see that the heavy suspicions which rest upon him affect you so deeply,” said M. de Beauvet ; “ and, really, but for his obstinate and most unaccountable silence, I

should say that he had the appearance of an honest and respectable old man. But his flight from the premises the moment he saw us, his pertinacious refusal to answer any questions that can be put to him respecting his object in concealing himself, or the manner in which he had been employed during the latter part of the night, render it almost impossible to doubt that he must have been engaged in the nefarious business into which it is our painful duty to examine."

"I had really believed," said Mr. Hargrave, drawing a long breath, "that old Roger Humphries had been an honest man. If your suspicions be correct, gentlemen, and it is impossible to deny that circumstances are strongly against him, he can only have been an agent for some one from without. I have, I think, before hinted to you my suspicions that this will turn out to be merely an affair of gallantry; and, bad as it is, that there is no reasonable ground for supposing that any violence has been used. Poor M. Bertrand appears to suffer so severely for the loss of this young woman, that it will be very

painful to open his eyes to the real state of the case. But take my word for it, gentlemen,"—and a vast deal of what appeared private and personal knowledge laughed in Mr. Hargrave's eye as he spoke,—“depend upon it, gentlemen, that when pretty Madame Bertrand came here last night, she had fully arranged the manner of her departure. Her magnificent *trousseau* contained more than one shawl—you cannot doubt it; and more than one cloak of ermine, also, perhaps. At any rate I neither feel now, nor did I last night, any very severe anxiety lest this *belle personne* should take cold during her drive. But, to speak seriously of a matter which is evidently felt seriously by one of the parties at least, I should strongly advise poor M. Bertrand to make as little fuss about the matter as possible.”

“ May I, without indiscretion, ask you, monsieur, if you have any particular reason for thinking Madame Bertrand a person likely to elope with such very scandalous publicity ? ” said M. de Soissons.

“ As to the discretion of such a question,

my dear sir," returned the gay Hargrave, laughing, "I must leave you to pass judgment, yourself; and for my answer—has it not been given already?"

"And do you suppose the gallant to have been among the party assembled here last night?" inquired the same gentleman.

"Upon my word that is a point to which I have not yet turned my attention," replied Mr. Hargrave. "But now you suggest it," he continued, musingly, "I should rather say not. The fact is, gentlemen, and I believe if you will inquire among any of the company present last night, they will tell you that the boast is not *cet d'un fat*, the lady in question was exceedingly gracious to me; and I am ready to own that, as far as dancing and flirting could go, I made the most of it. For, to say truth, I was inexpressibly amused by the unmitigated coquetry of this new little beauty, and did not consider myself called upon, in any way, to check it. I will confess, too, that I do not think the lover with whom I presume she has eloped could have been pre-

sent; as I think she would have been more reserved in manner if he had."

"This is most extraordinary," said M. de Soissons, who had listened to every word spoken with the most earnest attention. "I have been told, by persons who knew her well in the humble station from which the wealthy Bertrand has raised her, that she was a model of modesty and discretion,—I cannot understand it."

"*Hélas! cher ami!*" returned Mr. Hargrave, shrugging his shoulders; "I am grieved to say that such cases are not of very rare occurrence. But to return to this old man of whom you have made a prisoner, greatly, as I should suspect, to his astonishment. Do you really think it likely he should have been concerned in a business of this kind?"

"It does not appear to me that the nature of the business is quite so clearly ascertained as you seem to suppose, Monsieur Hargrave," replied M. de Soissons, thoughtfully. "It still strikes me as much more probable that this unfortunate young woman should have been

forcibly carried off for the sake of the immense wealth she carried about her in jewels, than that she should have eloped, within a month of her marriage, in a style of such unprecedented audacity. The police, I can assure you, are clearly of this opinion; and though M. de Beauvet, as he will tell you, suggested an interpretation of the adventure similar to your own, they paid little or no attention to it; saying that, let there be a lover in the case or not, the carrying away such an amount of property, whether by force or fraud, must be looked after. It was remarked, too, in reference to the mysterious conduct of your aged servant, that it was utterly impossible such an elopement could have taken place, let the object have been either love or plunder, without there having been a friend in the garrison to assist the *sortie*; and that, consequently, if this old man should be at last induced to speak and prove his innocence, a confederate with the guilty parties, whether the lady be one of them or not, must, of necessity, be looked for in your household."

"Nay, then," returned Mr. Hargrave, sigh-

ing, while his deportment suddenly changed from gay to grave,—“nay, then, if this be the case, I fear, indeed, that old Roger may have had a hand in it. The old man has often shewn himself avaricious; it is, as we all know, the vice of age—and I will not deny the having been long aware that it was his. But if robbery has been intended, gentlemen, depend upon it that it has been perpetrated under the mask of love; and that all the guilt which lies at the door of old Roger is that he has received a bribe,—a heavy one, I doubt not, to render the elopement easy.”

“If it prove so, if his share in the business be no worse than this, a frank confession would, of course, secure his release; as his rascality, presuming love to have been the ostensible object of the elopement, would appear to be of a nature of which the good-natured law takes no cognisance. But, of course, as long as the old fellow holds out, and continues to persevere in refusing us all information, he must be retained in custody; unless, indeed, we discover in the course of

our investigations some other person or persons whose agency in the business may prove to have been sufficient, without any necessity of implicating him : for in that case, you know, neither evidence nor suspicion would lie against him."

These words were uttered by M. de Soissons with great eagerness and rapidity ; while, as he spoke, the eyes of Mr. Hargrave were fixed upon him with a look, the direction of which never varied, though the expression of it did repeatedly ; and more than a minute elapsed after it was ended, before any word was uttered in reply ; both the Frenchmen remaining silently gazing at him, as if waiting for his opinion.

"I have been thinking," said Mr. Hargrave at length, "and I am thinking still, gentlemen, what will be the best manner of proceeding in order to satisfy the ends of justice, in case any illegal act has been committed ; or to obtain as much information as possible under the contrary supposition, in order to set the mind of poor M. Bertrand at rest, by convincing him that the affair is merely one

of gallantry. And it strikes me, that the best way will be to keep the old man in custody, and entirely alone, without stimulating his obstinacy by any further questions whatever. I know the nature and character of that old man well, and while I have little or perhaps no difficulty in believing that he may have been capable of receiving a bribe to assist the *escapade* of a pair of lovers, I consider it as absolutely impossible that he should have any thing to do in a more criminal undertaking. My knowledge of his character leads me also to the conviction that the silence which you very naturally denominate obstinate, but which he would consider honourable, is not likely to be shaken by any thing you could do or say to him. He is capable of being as firm as a rock—I know him to be so; and I therefore repeat that I strongly advise his being retained in custody, but without being questioned."

"But what is to be hoped for as the final result of this?" demanded M. de Beauvet. "I confess I see not what can come of it, excepting that we shall be confining a man on our own responsibility, instead of placing the

whole affair in the hands of the constituted authorities."

"Pardon me, monsieur," returned Mr. Hargrave, while his lip trembled either from displeasure at hearing his opinion controverted, or from some other feeling,—"pardon me, monsieur, that is not my meaning. If the old man be retained in custody, it should be only, I think, in my house, and with the understanding that I am greatly displeased by his refusing to answer the questions put to him. I would recommend that nobody should be admitted to see him but myself, and I have little doubt that I should soon gather from him all and every thing that he knows on the subject."

"We shall hear what the magistrates say on the subject," said M. de Soissons, slightly knitting his brows. "In a case of this kind, I should imagine that no private interference would be allowed."

"Permit me to observe, gentlemen," replied Mr. Hargrave, mildly, "that my interference has been wholly involuntary. It is my most earnest wish that justice should take its course; and rather than be suspected of interfering

with it, I will, if it be thought advisable, withdraw from Paris for a few days, till all proceedings connected with the affair shall have been brought to a conclusion."

Considerably shocked and surprised to perceive that their observations should have led their amiable host to conceive such a measure necessary, both the gentlemen hastened to assure him that he must have misunderstood the spirit in which they had spoken, and that so far from having any wish that he should absent himself, they had come, on the part of M. Bertrand to request his presence at an examination of their prisoner which was about to take place.

Mr. Hargrave coloured slightly, and bowed profoundly. "No, gentlemen," he replied, "it is impossible. Had nothing been said during the present meeting to suggest the idea that any interference on my part would be objectionable, the delicacy of my own feelings would, I flatter myself, have led to the same conclusion. The fact that one of my own servants is suspected of being implicated in the affair is quite sufficient to prevent my

taking any part whatever in the proceedings ; and I will trust it to you, gentlemen, to make my motives for holding back, understood and appreciated."

There was so much mild dignity in Mr. Hargrave's manner of saying this, that both his hearers were greatly struck by it. They were both of them good sort of men, and neither the one nor the other had any motive for the active part they appeared to be taking, beyond a feeling of compassion for the suffering they had witnessed in the unfortunate M. Bertrand. The idea that a man, so every way superior as Mr. Hargrave, should have reason for a moment to suppose that his conduct was, or could be, reflected upon as obtrusive or incorrect in any way, really distressed them ; and they vied with each other in offering him the most earnest apologies for any thing they might have said to wound his feelings.

Mr. Hargrave rose, and extending a hand to each, said, "Apology, my dear friends, is wholly unnecessary. I am convinced that there is one common feeling between us all concerning this unfortunate occurrence, and it

is quite impossible that we should mistake each other. But you will allow for the peculiarity of my position respecting the old man who is in custody. If any individual of my establishment can be suspected of having assisted, even by the mere withdrawal of a bolt, in this unfortunate business, it would be disagreeable to me to be obliged to interfere in it; but in the case of my old retainer, Roger Humphries, it, indeed, would be most peculiarly painful. I have confessed, with a degree of frankness which I am sure you must appreciate, that I do not consider the old man as likely to be proof against a bribe, but on all other points I have an excellent opinion of him; and were I to be examined as an evidence respecting his character, it is highly probable that I might be betrayed into expressing a warmth of kindly feeling and regard towards him which might be injurious, perhaps, both to him and to me. I shall, therefore, steadily decline appearing in the business; and shall leave it to you, my good friends, to explain my motives for doing so, whenever you may hear the circumstance spoken of. I must also request you, if you

please, to state both my refusal and the motive for it to the magistrate."

This speech was concluded with a bow, which seemed to say, "I dismiss you!" And the two gentlemen accordingly rose, uttered various obliging expressions of concern that his amiable hospitality should have involved him in so unpleasant an affair, and took their leave.

CHAPTER V.

THE two sisters were still sitting *tête-à-tête* in their boudoir; Sabina opening all the thoughts of her heart to Adèle, and Adèle the while, most cautiously concealing the one overwhelming idea that had taken possession of hers, and which had swallowed up all the rest, when a well-known step was heard at the door, and a well-known knock followed it.

“Ah! there is papa!” exclaimed Sabina, springing to the door, and throwing it open.

Adèle felt as if her life depended upon the degree of power over herself which she should be able to exert during this interview; and the pressure of the moment rendered her, as it has done millions of others, an actress. During the interval occupied by the embrace, given

and returned, between Sabina and her father, Adèle seized upon a cushion of the sofa, and laying it on the table before her, rested her head upon it. Could she have pressed it with her heart instead, there would have been no simulation in the act, for it throbbed in a manner that would have made the pressure welcome.

“ You are suffering, my dear girl ! ” said Mr. Hargrave, advancing gently, and leaning over her with a countenance of the most paternal kindness. “ Dearest Adèle ! I feared your restless night would make you ill.”

“ Has her night been restless ? ” cried Sabina. “ Why did you not tell me so, dearest ? I thought you looked very pale when you first entered, but you have been letting me chatter so since, that I quite forgot it. It is I have made your head ache, dearest Adèle ! ”

“ No, no ; it is only because I got up so foolishly early,” replied Adèle, attempting to smile. But she had better not have made the attempt ; for the effect produced by it was so greatly unlike all former smiles, that Mr. Hargrave, whose eyes were fixed upon her, changed

colour. Luckily she saw it not, or her discomfiture would have been complete. As it was, she rallied sufficiently, as Sabina bent over her, to say in a tone of very well affected languor, “Dearest child! it seems cruel to tell you so; but if the truth must be spoken, I do think that our long gossipings have completely knocked me up; for I really do feel ill: and as you have now got papa to talk to, I think I shall positively go to bed again;” and pressing her hand to her forehead, Adèle rose, and walked towards the door.

“If you are ill, Adèle, I cannot stay from you, even to talk to papa. You must let me be your Abigail, and put you to bed,” said her sister.

“And shall we not begin talking again if you do?” returned Adèle, shaking her head. “That will never do; you must let me go by myself, dearest.”

“She is quite right, Sabina,” said Mr. Hargrave. “I really will not let you go with her, because I am so very sure she will be better without you; while I, on the contrary, shall be vastly better if you will stay.”

This settled the business, and Adèle was suffered to depart.

“Did she not tell you, Sabina, that she had passed a restless night?” said Mr. Hargrave, as soon as the door was closed upon them. “Did she not tell you that I had heard her moving early this morning, and entered her room to inquire what occasioned it?”

“No, papa; she never said a word about it; and I am sure I wonder she did not, for that would have made me easy at once, as it would have explained her looking so very unwell and heavy-eyed. I taxed her with being ill, but she positively denied it, and said she only wanted to hear all the particulars about Madame Bertrand, which Agatha had begun telling her. But she knew nothing about that scene in the hall last night. You did not say any thing to her about it, papa, when you went in to her this morning?”

“No, indeed, I was only anxious for her to lie down and go to sleep again. But tell me, Sabina, was all the gossiping of which Adèle complained about Madame de Bertrand?—had you no other subject on which to talk to her?”

Sabina blushed, but made no other reply.

“I could not but remark, Sabina, that Prince Frederic paid you very great attention last night,” said Mr. Hargrave; for the first time touching upon the subject which had been so long next his heart, and which his last night’s observations, notwithstanding the many calls upon his attention from different quarters, had led him to think was in a state sufficiently advanced to justify paternal inquiry. “It would be a great pleasure to me, dear love, if you would in this matter treat me rather as a friend than a father; and tell me candidly, and without reserve, the nature of the conversation which you and the Prince held together, particularly at the supper-table.”

Sabina felt that she ought to comply with this demand, and, despite some painful beating at the heart, she did so; telling her father, as she had before told Adèle, that the Prince had expressed the kindest and most flattering sentiments towards her. “But what he said that was most important,” she added, with a sigh she could not check, “was just when the supper was over, and he was going away. He

told me then——” She stopped, for she felt her voice failing her ; and not even the noble frankness of her most pure nature, nor the almost boundless confidence she had ever reposed in her father, made her feel it necessary that she should display all that those last words of the Prince had cost her. The pause she made sufficed to let loose the coursers of Mr. Hargrave’s imagination, and on they galloped even to the very utmost goal of his wishes. “ My darling, sweet Sabina ! ” he exclaimed, “ fear not to trust your father ! Tell me what he said ! —tell me all ! ”

“ Nay, papa,” replied Sabina, gently, “ it was not much ; only I have seen him so often lately that I was rather sorry for it. He only said that he was going to leave Paris immediately after his own ball, and that he should not be able to meet us to-night.”

“ Leave Paris ! ” cried Mr. Hargrave gasping,—“ leave Paris immediately ! It is impossible, Sabina ! You do not believe he was in earnest ? ”

“ Oh yes, papa, he was quite in earnest,”

said Sabina, quietly ; her composure restored, as it seemed, by her father's want of it.

"Then he is ——" vehemently ejaculated Mr. Hargrave ; but suddenly stopping himself, he added, in a tone as light as he could contrive to make it, "a very capricious fellow."

"Why so, papa?" said Sabina, looking in his face with some anxiety.

"Merely because he seems to have changed his mind without having any very good reason for it," replied her father. "But come, Sabina, be quite candid with me. Has not Prince Frederic given you reason to suppose that he wished to gain your affections?"

"NEVER!" answered his daughter, with great solemnity ; all weaker emotions giving way before the honest and honourable wish of doing justice to the Prince. "Never, papa, for a single moment ; and if my vanity ever led me to suspect that I had touched his heart, it was when he told me that he was going : for I then thought it possible he might have felt for me what, in his station, it was his duty to overcome. If this be so, he is as noble-minded as

he is amiable, and I shall never cease to remember him with equal gratitude and esteem."

All traces of anger, and even of vexation, had passed from the countenance of Mr. Hargrave. He sat for some short time in a sort of meditative silence, and then said, "I agree with you, my dear child, in believing the Prince to be in every way estimable. Be very sure, Sabina, that he is a man whom you might trust under all circumstances. If, notwithstanding the admiration it is so very evident he feels for you, he should persevere in his intention of leaving Paris, it is because his attachment is less strong than his ambition; but should he change his purpose when he again sees you, and *remain*, be sure that he loves you better than all else. In all things I am convinced he may be trusted, for there is no falsehood in him."

"Most surely he may be trusted!" replied Sabina, earnestly; "and it is therefore that I know his departure is certain. God forbid I should think otherwise!"

"Why so, Sabina? Do you dislike Prince Frederic?"

“ Dislike him ? Oh ! papa !”

“ If not, my dear, why should you so fervently deprecate the idea of his remaining here ?”

“ Because I would not for the world believe that he could wish me to like him more than is consistent with my honour,” said Sabina, while a burning blush seemed to dry up the tear that trembled on her cheek.

Her father rose, and took her hand. “ I will leave you, my love,” he said, “ for I perceive this discussion agitates you. But, ere I go, let me say one word, lest the same noble mind which can so well understand Prince Frederic should unhappily misunderstand me. If the Prince feel for you the sentiments for which I have given him credit, his confessing it to you can lead to nothing but your honour. Sabina Hargrave may become a Princess of *****, but need not fear that any one will dare offend her by the utterance of a sentiment unfit for her to hear.”

Having said this, Mr. Hargrave quitted the room, leaving his daughter, as he intended to do, in a state of the most violent agitation.

“ So !” he exclaimed, as he once again en-

closed himself in his library, “the plot thickens upon me. Now or never! Glory, honour, and magnificence for life, or ruin, exposure, and death!”

* * * *

On leaving Mr. Hargrave, the two gentlemen, whom accident had thrown into so close a participation with the affairs of M. Bertrand, as made his interest appear almost like their own, hastened to present themselves before the Correctional Police, accompanied by Louis Querin, who, according to agreement, stood ready at the door of his master’s hall to attend them.

They found M. Bertrand, with whom they had communicated more than once during the course of the morning, already there; and, immediately after their arrival, Roger Humphries was brought forward as a prisoner, and Louis Querin and themselves desired to appear as witnesses against him.

The facts deposed against him consisted of his having been seen at about half-past five o’clock in the morning, wrapped in a plain great-coat over a very sumptuous livery, ap-

proaching his master's house, apparently with the intention of entering it; and, on being perceived, turning suddenly away, and making off, with very evident desire of concealment.

But although these circumstances were stated with perfect correctness, it was not done without such a mixture of commentary and interpretation as gave to old Roger's movements a vast deal more meaning than met the eye. Louis Querin, in particular, contrived to render his gloss of considerable more importance than his text, the examination proceeding in this wise:—

“ How long have you known the prisoner?”

“ Not long enough to have known any good of him; but it may be about two years.”

“ Has he ever before been the object of a criminal prosecution?”

“ If he has not, he has been luckier than many a better man; but I never heard that he had.”

“ What are your reasons, besides the fact of your having seen him endeavouring to conceal himself, for supposing it likely that he

was engaged in the carrying away of Madame Bertrand?"

"First, because I know him to be a very wicked old fellow, that would be ready to sell his soul for a piece of twenty sous,—which, to speak honestly, is considerably more than it is worth. Secondly, because he has the true spirit of the devil for intrigue: and, thirdly, because it stands to reason that it is impossible that the lady could be carried off, clear and clean, out of the garden, unless some one who knew where the key of the door was kept, had lent a helping-hand."

"That is quite true. But because a helping-hand was necessary, it does not follow, you know, that it must have been his?"

"Not at all," returned Querin, with a graceful bow. "Only if many circumstances tend to shew that he had something to do with it, and that all the rest of the household had not, the conclusion appears rather obvious."

"Undoubtedly. But how does it so clearly appear that no other individual of the household (which is a large one) had any thing to do with it?"

“ Because it would be easy to prove, by the evidence of many, that this old fellow was the only one of the whole set who was not seen in his proper place till the entertainment was completely over, even up to the time when these two gentlemen went out. Whereas Roger Humphries was called for, and not found, just after the supper was over; nor was he seen by any of us, till I had the honour of spying him attempting an *escapade* down the alley.”

“ He must be certainly remanded for further examination,” said the magistrate; “ and to give time for further circumstances to become known. Meantime it will be necessary to examine the premises.” Then turning to the puzzled, but in no way agitated old man, he said, “ The charge against you is a very grave one. Have you any thing to say for yourself?”

“ Not a word,” replied Roger.

“ Would it not be proper to search him?” said the miserable-looking M. Bertrand, who, till now, had not uttered a syllable, and whose countenance shewed that a few hours of men-

tal agony can bring a strong man low. "Would it not be well," he said, "to examine if he has upon him any sum that may look like a bribe, or any trinket, such as my captured, and perhaps murdered wife wore about her?"

That Roger Humphries was an Englishman certainly told much against him in the estimation of all the persons before whom he stood; nevertheless, there was a sort of decent dignity in his demeanour, which inspired something like a feeling of respect for him; and before M. Bertrand's very natural proposal was agreed to, the magistrate used the ceremony of asking the venerable prisoner if he had any objection to it.

"None in the world, monsieur," replied Roger, "provided no very dirty hands handle, my livery."

This was said without the slightest appearance of a sneer on the part of Roger; but yet, notwithstanding the spotless purity of the full-dress white coat, and bright blue waist-coat, *et cetera*, the magistrate slightly knit his brows, for the hands of the officials present were certainly not in a state to abide

the conditions suggested by Roger. The old man was probably aware of the embarrassment which his request was likely to produce, and accordingly set himself to perform the required examination, and that in such a way as fully to satisfy all present. First, the coat, heavy with crested buttons and broad silver lace, was drawn off, and, rather ostentatiously perhaps, held up to view, the pockets being turned inside out, and the pocket-handkerchief and fine damask napkin they contained, opened and shaken to the entire satisfaction of all parties. The waist-coat followed, and the spectators were introduced to an equally familiar acquaintance with that; and then Roger turned out for their edification the pockets of his sky-blue small clothes. One of these was entirely empty, but the other contained two sovereigns and a Spanish dollar. The old man laid these coins upon the desk of the magistrate, who, with the feeling, whatever it is, which often leads people to examine money that is placed before them, took them into his hand.

“ Where did you get these from, my

friend?" said the officer of Correctional Police, applying a glass to his eye as he examined them.

"From my master," replied Roger. "He paid me my wages a fortnight or three weeks ago, and that money is a part of it."

"How did you happen to have it in your dress small-clothes?"

"Because it was in those I put off, and I did not choose to leave it there."

"But you might have locked it up, you know?"

"I had no time, sir. I dressed myself in a hurry."

"You are quite sure you had this money,—these very identical coins, from your master?"

"Yes, sir,—perfectly sure."

"Does he always pay you in English gold?"

"No, sir, not quite always. But my master knows I like English money best, and always indulges me with sovereigns when he can get them."

"Do you know how he got these?"

"No, sir, I do not."

“ Did he pay you the whole of your wages, on this occasion, in gold ?”

“ No, sir ; a part was in silver.”

“ Such silver as this ?”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Should you have any objection to letting me change this money for other coins of the same value ?—It would oblige me.”

Roger made a civil bow, and replied,—

“ No objection whatever, sir ;” adding, with a slight shiver, “ May I put on my coat and waistcoat, sir ?”

“ By all means,” was the reply ; and while Roger carefully replaced his garments, the magistrate counted out the amount of the money which the pockets had contained, with honourable and scrupulous attention to the rate of exchange.

“ I presume, monsieur, that you doubt the fact of this money having been paid him by Mr. Hargrave ?” said M. Beauvet, in a low voice, to the magistrate.

“ For that . . . I don’t know,” he replied ; “ but I think it is as well.”

“ Certainly—assuredly—beyond all doubt. Perhaps you suspect that the person who eloped with her is an Englishman ?”

“ For that . . . I don’t know,” repeated the magistrate.

“ Do you wish, gentlemen, that I should take off my boots ?” demanded Roger, collecting the silver money which had been laid for him on the desk, and dividing it among all his pockets with scrupulous care, that the inconvenient metal might greatly injure none of them,—“ Shall I take off my boots and stockings, gentlemen ?—or undo the lining of my hat ?”

“ No, it is not necessary,” replied the magistrate. If it had been, it would have been all one to Roger ; for neither in his boots, nor his stockings, nor yet within the lining of his hat, was the note of Mademoiselle de Cordillac deposited, but, carefully enveloped in a morsel of silver paper, it lay enshrined in the folds of his muslin cravat, and had any hand sought it there, a struggle would have ensued which might have passed for the old man’s care to protect his own

throat from violence ; for he would have fought to preserve that precious scroll with quite as much energy as to preserve his life ; and rather, infinitely rather, would he have died, than betray the confidence, the flattering, the unbounded confidence, which had been placed in him.

“ You still resolutely refuse to tell us where you had been when these gentlemen and your fellow-servant saw you yesterday ? ” resumed the magistrate.

“ Yes, sir, I do , ” replied Roger, again bowing with great civility.

“ Neither will you tell us why you ran away, and endeavoured to escape the moment you saw them ? ”

“ I have not the least objection to tell you that, sir , ” said Roger, with great alacrity. “ It was only because I did not want to talk to them, and to be asked where I had been . ”

“ We might have contrived to guess as much as that, my friend , ” said the magistrate, half smiling. “ However, I will trouble you, at present, with no more questions ; and you may retire, under care of the *gensd’armes* ,

while I have some conversation with these gentlemen."

Roger Humphries was then led out; after which Louis Querin was given to understand that, for the present, his attendance was no longer required: but, just as he was about to take advantage of this permission to retire, the principal officer present, and who had been the spokesman through the preceding scene, left his place behind a high desk at which he sat, and accompanying Querin to the door of the office, said to him in a whisper, as they both stood in the passage upon which it opened,—

"Observe, my good fellow, the eye of the police is upon you,—not on your own account, you have hitherto behaved perfectly well; but on that of people near you. This, however, may eventually prove greatly to your advantage; for you may be useful to us, and we never forget our friends. But if you wish to count yourself as one of them, you must scrupulously and absolutely—remember, *absolutely*—obey our injunctions; and the first of these is, that you breathe not a syllable

of the arrest of this Englishman, nor of any thing important or unimportant which has passed during the examination, to any living being whatever ; and, to avoid all mischief from listeners, or any other accident, observe, I include your master. You understand,—you are not to mention the arrest of this old man, or any circumstance connected with it, to your master, or any one else. If you attend to this, it shall be the better for you ; neglect it, and it will be very considerably the worse ! And now, farewell ; our eye is over you.”

Louis Querin at once shewed himself worthy of receiving this confidential command, for he uttered no word in reply to it, but gave the intelligent agent of the Correctional Police a look which fully satisfied him. That gentleman then returned to his place, and addressing himself to M. Bertrand, who sat supporting his head upon a huge interleaved copy of the Code Napoleon, he said,—

“ Shall you wish, sir, to attend us to the mansion of Mr. Hargrave ? If you do, I will by no means refuse you the satisfaction of doing what you desire ; but if you have no such

wish, I shall be, on the whole, better satisfied: for to my judgment, founded, as you are probably aware, upon a good deal of experience, the fewer persons present on examinations of this kind the better."

M. Bertrand readily assured him that he should be perfectly satisfied to leave the investigation of this dreadful affair entirely in his hands; adding, that we was himself quite conscious that he was in no state to help the business.

"These gentlemen also, will, I hope, excuse me, if I beg to decline their attendance?" resumed M. Collet, turning to MM. De Beauvet and De Soissons. "The result shall be communicated to them without delay."

Both gentlemen expressed themselves entirely satisfied by this arrangement, and the party separated.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was about three o'clock in the day, and the grand *déjeûné*, or luncheon, at which all the family assembled, was over. Mr. Hargrave appeared at the table, with little or no alteration in his usual demeanour. When he addressed Sabina, indeed, there was, perhaps, a shade more of tenderness than usual in his look and manner; but in all other respects he was unchanged.

Madame de Hautrivaige was in high spirits, and exceedingly eloquent on the brilliant party of the preceding night, which she had her own reasons for thinking one of the most agreeable of the season: for, in the first place, she had waltzed with two noblemen; and, secondly,

had won three hundred and fifty-five francs at *écarté*.

Mademoiselle de Cordillac looked wretchedly ill, and confessed that she felt so; while Sabina, struggling vainly to recover the composure which the astounding nature of her father's parting speech in the boudoir had driven away, looked more beautiful than ever.

Exactly such conversation as might have been expected under the circumstances took place, and no other. Roger was inquired for in the most easy manner in the world by Mr. Hargrave; whereupon the two girls coloured, and exchanged a furtive glance; but the servant's reply, "I believe he is out, sir," appearing perfectly satisfactory to his easy master, it elicited no remark. At the conclusion of the meal, Madame de Hautravage drove out to make some trifling but indispensable purchases for the Prince's *féte*; and, *bon gré mal gré*, made the absent and half-dreaming Sabina go with her. Adèle retired to her room, declaring her intention of laying down till dinner; and Mr. Hargrave mounted his unrivalled cob, in order, as usual, to shew himself *partout*,

and to indulge in a few pleasant jestings with those he might meet on the singular elopement of the preceding night.

It was, then, about three o'clock, when, both carriages being fairly out of sight, M. Collet, the principal officer of the Correctional Police in the *arrondissement*, together with two other persons belonging to the establishment, gave the *sessamé* knock on the *porte-cochère* of Mr. Hargrave's residence, which, without question asked, causes the *cordon* to be drawn, and the entrance left free. The ready portress, however, stopped the party ere they had passed the archway which led into the court, informing them that both "*M. Hargrave et les dames étoient en ville.*"

"*C'est égal,*" said M. Collet, and passed on.

Having entered the open door of the mansion, and reached the ante-room, in which two or more idle retainers were ever lounging, sometimes gambling, sometimes reading the edifying romances of the day, and sometimes discussing the politics of both the household and the nation, the chief of the party inquired for M. Louis Querin.

“*Mais il est ici*,” replied a liveried *élégant*, neither raising his head nor turning his eyes from the draught-board, by the aid of which he was beguiling his superfluous leisure into taking the form of occupation. And “*Ici, monsieur !*” cried the individual inquired for, starting from a corner in which he was enjoying, with an equality perfectly republican, the *Charivari* which his superiors in the establishment had enjoyed before. “*Je suis à vos ordres, messieurs.*”

“We are come,” said M. Collet, quietly, “to examine the door, or doors, by which it is supposed that Madame Bertrand was taken away last night.”

These words at once centralised the attention of the draught-playing footman and of his friend,—of the porter, who was frowning in his arm-chair over the exciting columns of the *Presse*,—and of a youthful individual who had ventured to steal from the precincts of the stable-yard, in the hope of being suffered, unnoticed, to swallow a few gulps of the delicious and intoxicating literature with which all the ante-rooms of *la jeune France* are sure

to abound ;—not to mention M. Louis Querin himself, whose interest in the business, however, was rather marked by the look of stolid indifference which he immediately assumed, than by any symptom of the curiosity which animated his fellows.

They all started up, and seemed vehemently ready to assist in the proposed examination.

“ *Mais oui, monsieur, certainement,*” said the porter, solemnly.

“ *Par ici, messieurs!*” exclaimed the draught-player, hastening to open a side door.

“ *Je connais la porte, moi,*” said the young helper.

“ *Peut-être, je puis vous être serviable?*” hypothetically suggested the footman’s friend.

To all which M. Collet replied by shaking his head, and raising his hand with an action which seemed to say, “ *Avaunt, gentlemen!* if you please, for I want you not.” Upon which the four speakers drew back as if they had been shot. The citizens of *la jeune France*, taken individually, have the least possible inclination to meddle with her police ; though, collectively, they like nothing better

than for ever to set themselves in array against it, with their tongues and their pens, and occasionally, when sufficiently environed by their hopeful *gamins*, to give it battle with paving stones and rotten eggs.

“ Louis Querin,” said M. Collet, “ we have been given to understand that you were heard to speak of this affair as if you knew somewhat concerning it. It is you, therefore, who must accompany us into the garden.”

The individual thus addressed cast down his eyes, and bowed his head in silent and respectful humility, and then opened the side door from which his rebuffed fellow-servant had retreated.

Louis Querin led the way in silence, and in silence was followed by the officials of the Correctional Police, to the door in the garden-wall, which had been found open, and there he stopped; but after the pause of a moment made another step in advance, drew the bolts, and threw the door open.

“ It was thus,” he said.

M. Collet nodded, and stepped out, followed by his two attendants. They traversed the

alley in the same order, a few yards to the right and a few yards to the left ; but the alley was well paved, and there was no soil to indicate the recent passage either of men or horses. Immediately around the door, however, both within and without, the ground shewed traces of having been trodden ; and the acute M. Collet pointed out more than one foot-print to his companions, which had evidently been made by the delicately finished sole of a dancing *escarpin*.

“ But there is no woman’s foot-mark here ? ” said one of the assistants.

“ I perceive it,” said M. Collet, with another nod.

The trio then re-entered the door, which Querin still held open in his hand ; but hardly had they done so, when the chief, and the one who followed next, simultaneously pointed to a portion of the path where the mixture of earth and gravel had the appearance of having been recently passed over by two female feet of very pretty dimensions ; but both before and after the point at which these impressions were distinct were long and continuous tracks, as if

the same small feet had been dragged along. Advancing farther into the garden, all traces of steps, or of dragging upon the walk, ceased ; but the grass from that point to the corner of the temporary buildings had evidently been passed over, though in what manner, the nature of the surface rendered it difficult to decide.

M. Collet, after carefully examining the whole line, dictated to the third individual of the party certain notes upon it, which were immediately committed to writing by the aid of materials produced from the breast-pocket of his coat. Having waited without uttering an additional word till this entry was completed, M. Collet ran his eye over it, and then walked on to that *sortie* from the building which the still suspended canvass made visible. Here again he stopped, and very carefully examined every object, and particularly the ground. But here the grass had been so generally battered and bruised by the workmen employed upon the erection of the edifice, that it was impossible to trace any thing dis-

tinctly. M. Collet and his companions entered, and Querin, at his command, removed the pole which supported the canvass, and by dropping it reduced them to nearly total darkness; all the light they had proceeding from the chinks and crevices which the imperfections of the construction had left in the walls and roofs.

“ Go by the shortest path to the offices, and procure a light,” said M. Collet, addressing Louis Querin, who started off, and returned, bearing a large lamp that threw forth a strong light, with a degree of promptitude which procured him another approving nod.

The canvass, after a skilful touch or two, was made to hang as it had done when the room was prepared for the reception of the company; and M. Collet was as much struck, but more enlightened, perhaps, than Mademoiselle de Cordillac had been, by remarking the judicious position of the two large orange-trees, which so well assisted the effect of the arch between them.

“ Exit not to be detected from within,” said

the chief to the secretary ; and the words so spoken were committed to paper.

“ Now then, my friend,” said M. Collet, addressing Querin, “ replace that pole as you found it.”

Louis set about obeying him with his former silent and docile obedience, but he failed in immediately discovering the point at which the fluted columns, which formed the painted arch, divided.

“ It is cleverly painted,” observed M. Collet to his brother officer ; and as he spoke, he pointed out the division to Querin, and the continuation of the coloured columns upon the canvass which passed under it to his companion.

“ Who built these temporary rooms ?” said M. Collet, again addressing Louis Querin.

“ He is called Ponton,” was the reply.

“ But the workmen — do you happen to know the workmen who did the job ; not the *bourgeois* who employed them ?”

“ As it happens, monsieur,” replied Querin, “ the man who was always about the place while the work was going on, and who seemed

to keep all the rest going, is at this moment in Mr. Jenkyns' room (that is our *intendant*, monsieur), and he is waiting the return of Mr. Hargrave, to know when he is to set about removing them ; for sometimes, with us, this sort of thing is left standing from one *fête* to another, and it seems that Mr. Jenkyns knows nothing about it,—and all the family are out.”

“ All the family are out, are they ? Do you think, my friend—do tell me what is your name. You seem to be a very intelligent fellow, and I shall like to be better acquainted with you.”

“ Louis Querin, monsieur,” replied the accomplished domestic, bowing with an air of profound respect.

“ *Eh bien*, Louis. Do you think you could contrive to get this man, this workman, out of the *intendant*’s room for five minutes ? I should not want him longer,—but no one must know to whom you are bringing him.”

“ *Rien de plus facile*,” replied Louis. “ I have only to tell him that our Madame de Hautriveau has left a commission for him.”

And in less time than it took M. Collet and his subordinates to walk round the flowery *bocage* in which they found themselves, he had done his errand, and was seen returning through the now dismal, but lately bright arcades, followed by a man in the ordinary attire of a working mason.

“I want you to tell me, my good man,” said M. Collet, “under whose orders these very pretty rooms were erected?”

“I worked under the orders of M. Ponton,” replied the mason.

“Ah ça—we have a wager about it. I say it was Mr. Hargrave himself who gave the designs, and my friend here thinks it must have been a professional architect.”

“*Pas du tout, monsieur,*” replied the mason, perfectly satisfied by this explanation of the question; “*et vous avez gagné votre gageure.* It was Mr. Hargrave,” he added, “who composed the whole.”

“And he superintended the work himself; I’ll answer for him?” said M. Collet.

“*Rien de plus juste*—particularly this part of it. *M. Hargrave est un homme de talent—*

mais tout-a-fait homme de talent, monsieur. It was he who arranged this *sortie avec tout de finesse.*"

The wager thus satisfactorily settled, the mason was dismissed; and M. Collet, after dictating another little note to his secretary, passed again under the uplifted canvass, and, followed by his attendants, returned into the garden.

Here again it was not difficult to trace foot-steps round the corner of the building; but here again they appeared to be the result rather of the promiscuous treading of many workmen, than the distinct traces of foot-steps. The examination, however, was not abandoned, and this perseverance was soon repaid by the marks of steps, turning off the grass, and leading to a thicket amidst the evergreens of the shrubbery, which promised more discoveries.

Precisely the same process which had been performed by Mademoiselle de Cordillac about nine hours before was now repeated by the agents of police, but with considerably less of trepidation and a more satisfactory result; for,

whereas individuals of the species to which Adèle belonged never encounter any trace of crime without a pang of suffering, those of the Correctional Police are rather supposed to receive a throb of pleasure from the same, their sensations greatly resembling those of a sportsman who has succeeded in his pursuit of game.

In each of these examinations of the ground fate seemed to pay more than her ordinary attention to the feelings of the persons employed in them. What Mademoiselle de Cordillac found has been already related; but the discoveries of those who followed her went farther, for M. Collet himself using the trowel found on the ground, with considerable strength and agility, perceived that the earth had been moved to a greater depth than that of the spot where the settings of the mutilated trinkets lay, and presently came to the corner of a delicate white silk pocket-handkerchief, which, having seized and dragged from its dark receptacle, was perceived to be copiously stained with blood.

The professional gentlemen exchanged looks and shrugs, while the startled Louis Querin turned his eyes, first to one and then to another of them, to read in their faces, if possible, what they thought about it.

M. Collet did not seem disposed to converse on the subject of the remarkable relic he had found; but silently displaying to his secretary, first the mass of settings, and then the blood-stained handkerchief, he said, "*trouvés ensembles*;" and then, with the assistance of his other attendant, carefully enveloped the whole in his own ample bandana, converting the packet into a tight roll, little calculated to attract attention. This packet he confided to the hands of his companion, and then prepared to leave the ground.

"We will go through the garden door," said M. Collet, addressing himself to Louis. "You have behaved with acuteness, discretion, and propriety, and you have only to continue the same line of conduct, in order to ensure a degree of attention from us, which may be highly advantageous to you. You understand

me, Louis Querin? You understand that I still expect from you the most rigid silence as to all you have witnessed in this business?"

"Yes, sir, I do," returned Louis, and without adding another word he preceded the party to the garden door, which led into the alley, and opened it for them. M. Collet, as he passed through, bestowed another of his favouring nods upon his conductor, and so they parted, the gentlemen of the police quietly pursuing their unobtrusive way through the streets, and the well-contented Querin returning to the ante-room with a very elegant air of unruffled composure.

"*Mais dit donc,*" cried two or three voices at once as he made his appearance. "What do they say about it?"

"Very little," replied Louis, yawning. "These gentry are never communicative. But my own opinion is that they think the lady went off by her own free will—in short, that there is a lover in the case."

"To be sure there is!" was replied in chorus, followed by *quelques bons mots de valets*, which produced a hearty laugh; and then, with that

ever-changing variety for which French conversation is so justly admired, the subject was dropped, and another started.

And was this all the new light acquired by the family of Mr. Hargrave from the visit of the police to his premises? Not quite. There was one other person to whom chance had made it known, and for that one it had not passed off so lightly as for the party in the ante-room.

When Mademoiselle de Cordillac told the family before they set off for their different airings that she intended to lie down in the hope of getting rid of her headach, she said nothing but the truth, for such was, indeed, her intention; but no sooner did she feel that, excepting the servants, she was absolutely alone in the house, than the most feverish restlessness took possession of her. The discovery of the morning, and all the doubtful, frightful circumstances attending it, never left her memory for an instant, and she felt as if something within her was for ever gnawing at her heart. Yet still she fancied—such ever is the false reasoning of anxiety—that if she

could know the worst at once she should suffer less ; and fearless as to whom she might meet, now that the eye of her step-father was removed, she suddenly determined to revisit the spot where she had made the discovery which so grievously tormented her.

Having taken this resolution, she made her way through the great saloon, now almost totally dark, from the erections before its windows, and along the intricate and equally dark arcades, which led to that part of the structure which contained the hidden opening into the garden. Despite the darkness and the intricacy, however, there was no great danger of her going wrong, for she had paced the passages, and conquered their seeming difficulties so frequently, that she now knew perfectly well in which direction lay the Chinese room and in which the Turkish tent. She had already reached the mimic bower, now fully lighted by the broad glare of day, which streamed through the opening from whence she intended to enter the garden, and was directing her steps towards the space between the two orange-trees, when she distinctly heard

the sound of many steps without. Not doubting that they were those of servants coming to remove the plants, now languishing for more light and air, she turned aside into what had been a flowery passage of *treillage* from this bower of sweets to a room appropriated to ices, but did so rather to avoid the possibility of bandying words with any one than from any fear of being discovered there.

Both the obscurity and the form of the passage completely concealed her, and, ere she took her way by another entrance to this ice-room, which she knew would lead her back to the *sortie* from the saloon, she paused for a moment to learn if she were right in her conjecture about the plants, as, in that case, her project of returning to the buried gold must be abandoned for the remainder of the day, as the plants would all have to be ranged upon the lawn previous to their restoration to the conservatory, or to the gardens from which they had been hired.

A very short interval sufficed to shew her that she was mistaken. The party certainly did not exchange many words, but the broad

daylight, let in upon them by the opening through which they passed, shewed that they were not gardeners, nor, excepting Louis, in any way belonging to the family. Though already perfectly concealed, she gently retreated another step or two, yet not so far but that she was able to hear distinctly every word that followed.

The replacing the canvass, the sending Louis for the light, the pithy remarks on the concealment of the opening, and, finally, the examination of the workman as to the contriver of the device, all reached her without the loss of a single syllable.

The trembling girl now felt that her concealment was indeed important, and hardly permitting herself to breathe, she remained motionless as a statue till the mason was dismissed, and M. Collet and his party returned to the garden.

It was easy enough, from the nature of the structure, for the ear of Adèle to ascertain in which direction their steps were turned. The grotto-like wall of the ice-room, into which

she immediately turned, formed the termination of the temporary buildings, and a small aperture of about two feet square had been left at one end of it for the purpose of bringing in the necessary relays of ices, without the inconvenience of conveying them through the house. This aperture was but imperfectly closed by a curtain, and here, without any risk of being seen, Mademoiselle de Cordillac placed herself.

It is not necessary again to go through the particulars of the objects disclosed by the operations of the police, nor can any be at a loss to imagine what must have been the feelings of Adèle as she saw them displayed. The dreadful evidence of violence, so much more decisive now than before, seemed, as she gazed upon it, almost to turn her to stone ; and the strangers had departed, and all traces of their visit passed away, before she had sufficiently recovered herself to find her way back to her own room. But, being arrived there, she did indeed throw herself upon the bed ; and grievously did she lament, during the first agonising

moment of lying there, that she had not kept the promise so affectionately extorted by her sister, that she would try to sleep.

But as the first tumult of horror, terror, and confusion of intellect subsided, more settled, though not less miserable, thoughts took possession of her mind; and she began to examine herself as to what she ought to do under the extraordinary circumstances in which she was placed. It was impossible not to read aright the visit she had witnessed,—it was impossible that she could doubt having seen the agents of the police seek for, and discover, the traces of a fearful crime, or that they, too, as well as herself, felt a conviction that Mr. Hargrave was implicated in it. But to her this idea came with a difficulty of belief, which made even the evidence of her senses appear doubtful. Far, too, from combating this incredulity, she cherished it; and most assuredly both her memory and her judgment furnished abundant arguments which seemed to prove that, despite all appearances to the contrary, it was impossible Mr. Hargrave could have been guilty of the crimes which accident and the fatality of

circumstances appeared to lay to his charge. With the resolute calmness which an urgent necessity is almost sure to inspire in such a mind as Adèle's, she once more set herself to examine all the facts which had come to her knowledge since this dreadful period of her existence began. She had heard Mr. Hargrave engage an agent to assist him in obtaining possession of some female whom he professed to adore. He had paid a degree of attention to Madame Bertrand, which might easily enough be interpreted into making love to her. Madame Bertrand had subsequently disappeared, and Adèle had great reason to believe that Mr. Hargrave had assisted in her abduction. This was bad enough, and sufficiently lamentable to cause her the deepest regret; but how immensely distant was such regret from the feelings which must follow upon believing that her step-father was guilty of the crimes which she could not doubt that the agents of the police were prepared to lay to his charge! But how was she to separate and divide events which were so closely woven together? How separate the abduction of

Madame Bertrand from the horrible fate which had too evidently followed it?

Again and again did Adèle ponder over the possibility of so dividing into different events facts which seemed but part and parcel of one and the same, as to believe that her step-father had said the words which she heard him speak, and been in the places where she had seen him appear, and yet was neither an assassin nor a robber.

So strongly, indeed, did all she had ever seen and known of him plead against the possibility of his being guilty of the crimes which she felt certain would be laid to his charge, and so beyond measure improbable did it seem that a man in his worldly position, even if less averse to such acts by nature, should have committed them, that she finally brought herself to the conclusion that it was impossible, and that some turn in the labyrinth which she contemplated was concealed from her, which, if seen, would account for truth lying in one direction and the appearance of it in another.

To this belief she clung, and according to

it she determined to act; and the first step towards putting this determination into practice was to seek Mr. Hargrave the moment he should return to the house, and tell him of all she had witnessed in his absence. The resolution to do this, once taken, was a great relief to her; she should no longer have to groan under the weight of the oppressive secret, and whatever danger, whether just or unjust, real or imaginary, threatened the protector of her childhood, the husband of her mother, and the father of her beloved Sabina, she would have set him on his guard against it.

While these things were passing in the mansion of Mr. Hargrave, that gentleman was enjoying an exhilarating drive up and down the Champs Elysées, and as far along the Boulevards as fashion would permit him to go. During the course of which drive he had met nine-tenths of the elegant idlers of Paris, to nearly all of whom he was known, and with many of whom he stopped to hear and to utter a light word or two upon the misfortune of the unlucky *millionnaire*, who had lost the pretty wife he had purchased, before he had got tired

of her. To all of these Mr. Hargrave related, with much humour, the tragic-comic scene which had been performed in his ball the preceding night, declaring, that though he could not but laugh at the recollection of poor M. Bertrand's gesticulative despair, it had really affected him very differently at the time, and that, all jesting apart, he was very sorry for him.

All this lasted till nearly six o'clock, about which time he returned home, considerably fatigued by the exertions of both day and night, and throwing himself upon the sofa in the library, prepared to repose for a few moments before he dressed for dinner and for an evening engagement at the house of the — Ambassador, which was to follow it.

Before he had lain there five minutes, his eyes closed and he dropped asleep; but ere this needed reprieve had lasted as many more, it was chased by the voice of Mademoiselle de Cordillac, who, having gently touched his shoulder with her finger, pronounced the word “Papa!”

Mr. Hargrave awoke with a violent start,

and looked up with an eye that seemed to expect alarm: but the moment he saw Adèle, the expression of his countenance changed, and gaily taking her hand, he said, " Sit down, my dear girl, I have something exceedingly amusing to tell you."

Adèle, as we have seen, had managed to soothe herself into believing that it was as impossible, as it certainly was improbable, that her step-father could be guilty of the crimes which appearances seem to lay to his charge; and though her knees trembled and her pulse kept no healthful time as she approached him, she was nerved for the task as much by the hope that naming the subject would lead to an explanation of what was now so darkly difficult, as by that of preparing him for the measures which the police were likely to take against him.

It may be thought, perhaps, that such an air of innocence on his part as was displayed by the gay words he uttered upon seeing her, ought to have increased her confidence and set her comparatively at ease; but it was not so. On the contrary, there was something so re-

voltingly incongruous in the tone to the actually known and acknowledged state of things, that she felt as if the chill of death had seized upon her, and when she sat down it was less for the purpose of listening to him than to prevent herself from falling at his feet.

“I have taken a long drive,” resumed Mr. Hargrave, “and have encountered half Paris, I believe; but to convey to you an idea of one half of the comic stories that are afloat about little Madame Bertrand is, I am afraid, impossible! Upon my honour, Adèle, I have laughed till I am as weary as an old post-horse after his fourth stage, and it will be a proof of immense affection and generosity if I rouse myself in order to communicate a portion of it to you.”

“Do not, father!” said Adèle, in a voice that might have startled any man, let his nerves have been in what state they would. Though speaking to her, he had as yet hardly looked in her face, for he lay stretched with apparent listlessness on his back, with his half-closed eyes fixed upon the ceiling. But now he started up and gazed at her with orbs

that seemed starting from their sockets. All self-command was for the moment lost, and fear and guilt looked out through every feature.

Adèle felt as if the dark curtain which concealed the truth had been drawn up before her eyes, and that all which her soul shrunk from looking on, was now disclosed. She, too, gazed both long and fixedly, and the group might have served a copying sculptor well, for the two figures sat as if they were already turned to stone.

Mr. Hargrave attempted to speak ; he would have asked her meaning, but no sound proceeded from his dry and parted lips. But Adèle now needed no questioning. Happily for all parties, the idea of Sabina seemed suddenly to take entire possession of her ; neither horror, indignation, nor fear towards the miserable man before her, entered into her heart or head. He must be saved ! — Sabina's father must be snatched from the horrible fate that was preparing for him, though all the *gens-d'armerie* of Paris were to rush forward to prevent her ! When a woman of strong feelings is placed in a situation sufficiently ex-

citing to make her thoroughly and entirely forget the weakness of her frame and the habitual cowardice of her nature, she becomes as dauntless as an Alexander. Adèle de Cordillac at that moment wholly lost sight of self, and this, together with an important object to be achieved, suffices to make a hero.

No sooner had her mind received from the testimony of her eye the full conviction that Mr. Hargrave was guilty, and consequently in the extreme of danger from the arrest which threatened him, than the conveying him instantly away seemed half accomplished; so completely, and without a second of interval, did it take possession of her thoughts.

"Father! there must be no questions asked, and I must manage for you," she said, with a degree of sedate steadiness that did more towards bringing the unhappy man out of his seeming trance than any exclamations could have done.

"You know it all then, Adèle?" he replied, his fixed features relaxing and his pale lips trembling like those of a woman when in the agony that precedes the relief of tears.

“All, father, all! And you must leave Paris this night, and France with all the speed we may. The agents of police have been here, examined the garden, and found every thing! They think themselves secure of you, and we must make them think so still for a few hours. Dress instantly, command yourself during dinner, drink wine if you need it, leave the rest to me; but remember—*always* remember, that Sabina knows nothing, and NEVER shall! Beware of this, and take good care of her; should this fall on her, we all sink together. REMEMBER THIS! I ask no more of you, leave all the rest to me. Dress for the Ambassador’s party,—dress instantly.”

With these words, Mademoiselle de Corillac left the room, and felt, as she returned to her own, as if some unknown and supernatural power sustained her. She found her maid busily engaged in laying out the dress and the ornaments which she was to wear at the evening’s *fête*, and walking to the bed and examining some of the finery which lay upon it, she said, in a voice perfectly steady though a little hoarse, —“Go to my sister, Susanna.

I was quite tired and ill when she went out, and greatly doubted if I should feel equal to this ball to-night; but tell her,—will you?—that I am so much better that I intend to dress and go."

The maid left the room, and Adèle flew to ransack a shelf in her wardrobe, on which, among other preparations for the fancy-balls of the last carnival, was a pot of rouge. No disguise of wig, powder, or any thing else had ever so changed the appearance of Mademoiselle de Cordillac, as putting a large quantity of carmine upon her usually pale and delicate cheek; but, without intending to go the length of disguise, she applied it now, for she had caught sight of her almost ghastly face as she passed a mirror, and certainly did much towards restoring her usual appearance by the slight and cautious use of it. Thus prepared, she awaited the return of her maid, and then went through the business of dressing without the least appearance of agitation or even of indifference to the business that was going on.

“ Monsieur votre papa va en ville ce soir,

avec ses *demoiselles*?" said Susanna, interrogatively.

"*Mais, certainement,*" replied Adèle. "What makes you doubt it, Susanne?"

"No, mademoiselle, it is not I that doubt it at all, for I know you never go out without him," replied the girl; "but it was Louis Querin who told me to inquire."

"And what sets him thinking about it?" said Adèle, carelessly.

"That is more than I can say, mademoiselle. I don't know what he has got in his head altogether. There is nobody more *aimable* in general than Monsieur Louis, but to-day he has been so stiff and so silent that it was impossible to get a word or a look from him. The very first word I have had from his lips to-day—at least, since breakfast—was his asking me if *monsieur votre papa* was going to the ball to-night; and then when I answered, 'Yes, to be sure he is,' he began again about it, and in his old coaxing way of asking any thing, desired me to inquire particularly and to let him know before your dinner."

"Satisfy him by all means, Susanne," re-

turned Adèle, with a familiar smile. “ We are all going to pass the night *chez M. l'Ambassadeur de —.*”

Mademoiselle de Cordillac was the first of the family who entered the drawing-room dressed for dinner, and to her great satisfaction her step-father was the next.

“ This is well, papa,” she said, going up to him and speaking gravely, but kindly. “ I rejoice to see you alone for a moment without the appearance of seeking you.”

She then looked carefully round the noble drawing-room to ascertain that they were quite alone, and approaching nearer still, she whispered a few words in his ear which caused him to look at her with equal gratitude and surprise.

“ Preserver !” he exclaimed ; but if he wished to say more he was prevented by the entrance of Madame de Hautrivate, who, in full dress, swam up the room smiling in happy consciousness of the very peculiar elegance of her attire. Sabina followed the minute after, and began to challenge the looks of her sister, who in truth,

despite her delicate touch of rouge, looked wan and hollow-eyed.

“ You must not heed my looks, Sabina,” she replied aloud, as a servant entered to announce the dinner, “ I am perfectly worn out with these eternal *fêtes* and shall look no better till they are over.”

The dinner passed much as usual ; for if Mr. Hargrave and Sabina talked less, Madame de Hautrivate and her eldest niece talked more—the one from the joyous anticipation of an evening as successful as the last, and the other because she was steadfastly predetermined not to be silent.

Coffee followed them into the drawing-room as they re-entered it, and when this was dismissed and all the servants had left the room, Adèle rose from her seat, and going to the sofa where her aunt and sister were sitting together, she knelt upon a footstool at their feet, and taking a hand of each said with great solemnity,—“ Dear aunt ! dear Sabina ! I have heavy news to tell you ; but if you have prudence and courage—if we have all of us pru-

dence and courage—every thing may yet be well."

"Heavy news!" was uttered by both the terrified females thus addressed in the same breath.

"What can you mean, Adèle?" almost shrieked Madame de Hautrivate.

"Speak, Adèle! speak!" muttered Sabina.

"I will speak," returned the resolute girl, with astonishing firmness, "and you must listen to me calmly and reasonably. My father — your father, dearest Sabina — has most rashly involved himself in a plot against the present Government, which, if he were taken at this moment, would probably endanger his life; but if he can contrive to escape from Paris to-night, will, it may be, produce no further ill consequences than the necessity of choosing for a time some other residence. But we must be both prudent and prompt in the aid we give him, or he is lost."

"*Mais, mon Dieu! quelle aventure!*" exclaimed Madame de Hautrivate, turning her eyes to heaven. "*Cependant il faut faire*

l'impossible pour lui sauver : for, after all, who can blame him ! Thank God ! there is nothing vulgar in the business ! On the contrary, it is a romance of the highest interest, and if he succeeds, as we must all pray he may do, who shall say to what rank he and his family may not attain when the château next changes its inhabitants ? ”

While the prescient Madame de Hautriveau uttered this burst of prophetic wisdom, Sabina seemed struggling between life and death, and with one hand clasped by her father and the other by Adèle, was literally gasping for breath to speak. At length she said,—“ Father, I can do any thing ! You shall find I am not weak ; I will be strong as our glorious Adèle, who even now looks composed and self-possessed. Oh, happy Adèle ! teach me, tell me what to do, and you shall find I am not unworthy of you.”

“ Sit down, papa,” said Adèle, gently ; “ *et vous ma tante*, I pray you keep yourself from exclamations that may betray us. I am sorry to tell you that if papa is taken, perpetual

imprisonment will be the consequence to us all: it is quite impossible that any of us should escape."

"*Mais, Dieu m'en garde!*" exclaimed the terrified lady. "In the name of the Virgin Mother, and all the blessed saints, her company, what am I to do? Tell me, Adèle!—tell me!"

"Endeavour to compose yourself, aunt, and decide at once whether it is your wish to share our exile, or whether you would deem it best, as, perhaps, it may be, to remain in Paris in your former apartments, and with every appearance of knowing nothing about the matter."

"*Mais certainement, ma chère*—that, of course, is the only line of conduct for me to pursue. I will go to the ball, and my discretion shall be perfect. I will return here to sleep, and in the morning pack up my little wardrobe and depart. *Heureusement ces choses là ne font pas de scandale*—*tout au contraire*. But you must tell me before we part, to what part of the world you are going during this little interval?"

“ To England,” replied Adèle,—“ to London.”

“ *Ah ça — c'est très-bien — mais parfaitement bien. Vous seriez tous, si bien là ! Il ne faut pas m'écrire directement, vous savez, mais sans doute j'aurais bientôt de vos nouvelles.*”

Adèle nodded assent to this, and then turning to her sister, said,—

“ Sabina, my dear love ! I have the greatest confidence in your courage when called upon by such a crisis as this; and for the scheme I am about to propose to you, I shall require it all. Any other but yourself, dearest, might think that I imposed the heaviest task upon you, while taking a lighter myself; but you will not think so, Sabina, even when I tell you that I mean not to go to this ball to-night, although you must. Think you that you can bear this, and with such an aspect as may not do more harm than good ?”

“ Yes, Adèle, I do think so,” replied Sabina, fervently kissing the hand of her father, which still clasped hers, as if solemnly pledging her-

self to the task, and at the same time expressing the feeling which would enable her to perform it. "And you, Adèle," she added, with such a look of intense anxiety in her eyes as left no need of further speaking to express it,—"what shall you do the while?"

"My purpose is to employ the interval that you are to pass at the ball, in *obtaining a carriage to convey us post to Calais, whence, if the starting of the packet favour us, we shall reach England in a few hours*," said Adèle, with emphasis. "Fear nothing," she continued, "about a change of dress—I will provide for that. Remember, father, that on leaving the carriage when you arrive at the Ambassador's, when the footman inquires at what hour you shall require it, you must reply, '*four*;' we are often later than that on these dancing occasions, and it can create no surprise. You will not object, aunt, to remaining till that hour, will you?"

"*Mais non, ma chère*," replied the philosophical conspirator, "*quand on joue, on ne s'ennuye pas.*"

Madame de Hautrivaige then rose, and offer-

ing her cheek to her brother-in-law, said that, her toilet not being yet "*absolument accompli*," she was obliged to retire, and might not again find so favourable an opportunity of expressing her perfect esteem and admiration for his noble *dénouement* to the cause so near to her heart. She then embraced her two nieces, and charged them not to forget "*la pauvre tante*" in the gay scenes to which, of course, they would be immediately introduced at the court of England, where they were so well calculated to shine.

" You will, for this night, be profoundly silent, my sister, on all that concerns me?" said Mr. Hargrave, earnestly.

" *Mais, mon Dieu, oui, mon frère!*" she replied, with some little appearance of displeasure. " *Est-ce que j'ai jamais de ma vie fait des imprudences? — et puis, croyez-vous enfin, que je désire être claquemurée tous mes jours pour l'amour de jaser?*"

And with these words she left them, to the great relief of the wretched man and the two innocent girls, who were now to sit in council upon all the details which concerned

his liberty and life. The moment was an awful one to them all.

“ Fear not her discretion, father,” said Adèle, answering to the anxious expression of Mr. Hargrave’s eye, as he watched his weak and heartless sister-in-law depart. “ Should she send all the *gens d’armerie* of Paris after us on the road to Calais, it would do us no harm, for we must travel by a route less likely to be thought of for us, even without the aid of our good aunt’s tongue; and in a manner, too, as different as possible from what she has now heard me mention.”

“ But who is there about us that you can venture to trust, Adèle ? ” said Mr. Hargrave, almost in a whisper. “ If Roger, indeed—if Roger Humphries were returned —— ”

It was now Adèle’s turn to change colour, and, alas ! to feel also in some sort guilty. Had she not, in the feverish imprudence of her unauthorised feelings for Alfred Coventry, despatched this faithful servant on her own affairs, he would have been now at hand to give the aid so greatly needed, and which, most truly, they could look for, with perfect

trust and confidence, from no other. She rested her aching head upon her hand, but said nothing.

“ It is possible that he *may* be returned,” cried Sabina, thoughtlessly, starting from her seat, and seizing the bell.

Adèle shook her head, and almost groaned; while Sabina, now fully recollecting all the circumstances of his absence, heaved an unchecked sigh, and shook hers also. They both had but too good reason for fearing that this hopeful suggestion had no probability in it, yet still they both hung with deep anxiety on the reply of the servant who had answered the bell, to the question put by Mr. Hargrave, — “ Is Roger returned yet?”

“ No, sir, he is not,” replied Louis Querin, demurely, for it was he who had obeyed the summons; and after he had said it, he waited, with his large eyes in full activity, reconnoitring the group, as if expecting some order to follow.

“ Tell him when he returns,” said Mr. Hargrave, “ that I shall want another packet of the same crayons that lie got for me last week,

and that I shall desire to have them as soon as I am up."

The handsome lip of Louis Querin curled into a smile, but he replied, with all observance, "Yes, sir," and retired.

"That man," said Adèle, who had seen the smile, and perfectly understood it,—"that man is under the orders of the police. The same chance that discovered the rest to me discovered that. Should he attend the carriage to-night, as I have no doubt he will, take care that he distinctly understands that it is your purpose to remain till four o'clock; he will hardly wait in the hall till that hour—he will go, probably, and return."

"If he has it in charge to watch me, Adèle," said Mr. Hargrave, strongly agitated, "I fear not—I fear not!"

Mademoiselle de Cordillac shuddered, and turned away her eyes from the troubled countenance that was directed towards her. All the horrid circumstances of the crime which the law was waiting to avenge recurred to her, and for a moment she doubted the rectitude of her own conduct. But the look averted from

her step-father fell upon Sabina, and her fixed purpose returned in all its force.

“Perhaps this is what we have the greatest reason to fear,” she replied; “but we must be prepared for it.”

She then explained briefly, but with perfect clearness, the plan she had arranged for meeting them in a *fiacre* at the corner of the street in which the Ambassador’s hotel was situated; a white handkerchief, hanging from her hand out of the window, would shew them at what carriage they were to halt. Such a mode of taking their departure would have nothing uncommon in it, inasmuch as all persons (and there were many) who made use of a *fiacre* upon those occasions being obliged, by the regulations of the mounted patrol, to leave the vehicle at the end of the line.

“But should that man—that Louis stop us, Adèle, how are we to evade him?” demanded the trembling Hargrave.

“By in no degree appearing to evade him, sir,” replied his youthful counsellor. “You must leave the rooms with Sabina, ready cloaked, on your arm, in the usual way, at

about two. If you do *not* see Louis, pass out as if your carriage had been announced. The servants at the entrance, if they know you, will think that you are going to another party perhaps, or, at any rate, unwilling to wait till your people come up. Nor does it matter what they think. If, unfortunately, Louis is in the hall, and comes up to you, tell him that Sabina is suddenly taken ill, and that he must run with all speed for your carriage, declaring aloud your intention of waiting in the hall till he comes back. He will probably think you too safe there to make any difficulty of obeying you, and immediately after his departure let Sabina ask for the fresh air, and then lead her out. Should you recognise the carriage of a friend in the court, get into it, pleading Sabina's illness, and on reaching the end of the street, where I shall be stationed, get out, under pretence of having reached the dwelling of the medical man whom you wished she should immediately consult. You will see the handkerchief, and depend upon it I shall see you. You understand me—both of you?"

Both assured her that every word she had

spoken was clearly understood, and would be well remembered.

Adèle then rang the bell, and desired her maid might be sent to her, for she felt unwell; and after swallowing a reasonable quantity of sal volatile, and so forth, she retired to her room, declaring herself too seriously ill to accompany the others to the ball.

The first proof given by Madame de Hautrivate of her perfect discretion was her exclaiming, pretty nearly aloud, to Sabina, after accompanying the invalid attentively to the bed-side,—

“Comme elle joue bien la comédie, n'est pas?”

Fortunately, however, this sally was not overheard, and the party set off, leaving the anxious Adèle to accomplish the task she had set herself.

During the short interval given by Madame de Hautrivate and Sabina to their attendance on Mademoiselle de Cordillac to her room, Mr. Hargrave entered his library, as he keenly felt for the last time, and putting the moments as effectually to profit as if no such paralysing

thought had occurred to him, he opened the secretary drawer, into which, for long years of reckless extravagance, he had been in the habit of throwing the large sums of ready money he kept for daily use, and drawing thence gold, and other valuables, to a very considerable amount, had the satisfaction of feeling that he carried away with him all the convertible treasure that was left from the wreck of his once ample fortune and many successful schemes; and the consideration tended to console him even in that moment of misery. He then hastily entered his own room, and threw together a few necessary articles of clothing for Adèle to convey, and then rejoined Sabina and her aunt.

CHAPTER VII

SUSANNE, the personal attendant of Mademoiselle de Cordillac, remained beside the bed of her mistress when Madame de Hautrivate and Miss Hargrave left her. As Adèle for a few moments lay perfectly still, the girl, who really loved her dearly, hoped that she had dropped to sleep, and was gently about to withdraw herself, when she was startled by her mistress's suddenly rising up from the pillow, and taking her hand.

“Susanne,” she said, “am I right in believing that you love me?”

Earnestly and affectionately the girl replied that she should be the most ungrateful creature living if she did not.

“Then, Susanne, I will trust you, my

good girl, with a secret dearer to me than my life ;” and so saying, Adèle sprang from the bed, and began in all haste to disembarrass herself of her various ornaments.

So sudden a recovery, accompanied by such words, would probably have suggested to any waiting-maid in the world the idea of a love-affair ; and, to a French one, any other interpretation was, of course, impossible.

“*Mais oui, mais oui !*” exclaimed the tender-hearted Susanne, with great unction ; “ mademoiselle may confide in me as in her own heart. Ah ! mademoiselle is too beautiful not to have many lovers !”

“ That a lover is in the case, Susanne, I will not deny,” replied Mademoiselle de Cordillac, with a nod and a smile that in an instant awakened all the girl’s sympathies in favour of whatever there was to be done or said in the business. “ But it is not *my* lover of whom I must speak to you,—it is the lover of the dearest friend I have in the world, or rather, Susanne, it is of herself. Have you courage enough to assist in saving her ? For myself, Susanne, I give you my honour that I would die to do it !”

“ *Que c'est beau!*” exclaimed the girl, raising her bright eyes to the ceiling, and then adding, with an accent of great enthusiasm,—“ *Oui, mademoiselle* — any thing and every thing! There is nothing—no, nothing that I am not able and willing to do to serve so good a mistress in so good a cause.”

Adèle then explained to her that the friend in question, whom from delicacy, she said, she should forbear to name, had been most cruelly treated by her father, who had not only contrived to get the “ *estimable jeune homme*” she adored sent to Africa, but insisted upon her marrying another immediately. “ This friend of her father's, Susanne, is the most odious creature that exists; old, ugly, jealous, and *si avare*, that he was never known to give away a franc in his life.—*Imaginez!*”

“ Poor — poor young lady!” replied the waiting-maid, touched almost to tears. “ What is there we can do to help her ?”

“ Listen to me, Susanne, and you shall hear our plan. This hateful marriage is fixed for to-morrow; and to-night — this very night, Susanne—we must assist my friend to escape.”

“ *Mais c'est tout naturel,*” replied Susanne.

“ You must immediately contrive to bring into my room, unseen by every body, two of your own dresses, complete,—every thing, observe, from head to foot; and I will give you in exchange for them,—look here, Susanne,—these three silk dresses, and this favourite shawl that I have so often heard you admire. Will that content you ?”

“ Content me ? Oh ! mademoiselle, *c'est bien vous, ça !* And will you put on one of my dresses, mademoiselle ? Ah ! that is delightful !”

“ Well, then, manage it all well for me, dear Susanne, and you shall be rewarded for it more hereafter. There will be no difficulty, I suppose, in your taking these dresses away ? It will only appear that I have been giving them to you because I have done with them.”

“ *Mais assurément,* mademoiselle ! I should like to see any one finding fault with me because it is your pleasure to give me a dress. There is nothing very new or surprising in that, mademoiselle. If you will be pleased to sit down and repose yourself for about five

or ten minutes, I will be back again with all you want. *Mais tenez*, mademoiselle,—let me have some of your *collerettes* to put on the top of the basket in which I will bring the things for you and your friend ; and then, if I chance to be met as I come back, it will pass for bringing your linen from the laundress."

This clever proposal was readily agreed to, and the well-pleased Susanne set off upon her errand, thrice happy,—in obliging a mistress she loved, in making a splendid addition to her own wardrobe, and in being actively employed in a love-affair.

But the promised minutes of Susanne's absence were too precious to be spent in repose. No sooner had she left the room, than Adèle hastily collected, for herself and Sabina, a few needful articles of comfort, which she made into a parcel for Susanne to carry ; while about her person she concealed a magnificent set of pearls, which her mother had received as a *cadeau de noces* from her father, and a few other valuable trinkets, which, with the small sum of ready money in her possession,

would suffice to secure them from pecuniary distress during the interval which must necessarily elapse before she could hope to arrange her own affairs so as to ensure the regular receipt of her own income.

This necessary precaution taken, she ran to the apartment of Mr. Hargrave, found the packet he had promised to leave, and then returning, so arranged her dress, as to be ready to assume in a moment the exterior garb which was to convert her into a *soubrette*. Before this was fully completed, the faithful Susanne returned, furnished so completely with all that was necessary for the double metamorphosis, that it would have been difficult to say whether she displayed therein most professional cleverness, affectionate attention, or masquerading readiness of invention.

The remainder of the dressing business was soon completed, and the suit intended for Adèle's "*friend*" being added to the small packet already prepared, nothing now remained but to get out of the house unseen, or, at least, unchallenged. And here the *savoir faire* of the waiting-maid was of essential

service ; and she assured her mistress, who trembled from head to foot when this critical moment arrived, “ *Qu'il n'y avait rien au monde de si facile.* ”

“ But all the servants, Susanne ? ” said Adèle, as she cast a terrified look at the mirror, and shuddered at perceiving how very much less smart and *débonnaire* she looked in her new attire, than any individual she had ever seen of the class she was attempting to imitate. She fancied her awkwardness would bring all eyes upon her, and again repeated—“ Oh, Susanne ! the servants ! 'Twill be impossible they should not know me ! ”

“ Why if mademoiselle presented herself in the midst of the *maisonnée*, ” replied the girl, laughing, “ I would not undertake to answer for her passing unobserved, — Mademoiselle looks frightened, — *et nous autres, nous ne sommes pas comme ça* ; but I am not *si bête* as to propose that mademoiselle should be seen, nor myself either. *Ciel !* going out at this hour ! Not that there is danger in the streets either. We shall get a *fiacre* in a moment. *La place est tous près.* *Venez, made-*

moiselle ! Ne craignez rien : je m'y connais si bien !"

Adèle had no alternative but to trust entirely to her guidance ; for in this part of the enterprise she felt as helpless as a child. But Susanne was no vain boaster, and it was soon evident that she knew perfectly well what she was about. The weary servants, too, had nearly all of them, long ago, retired to rest ; and the obscure and, to Adele, utterly unknown passages into which they turned, almost immediately after quitting her room, brought them, after many windings, both up and down, to a dirty little passage, leading from the offices into that corner of the garden from whence issued the *sortie* to the alley which has been already mentioned.

It has been said that the domestic architecture of France, and of southern Europe in general, if accurately examined by intelligent eyes, shews symptoms of a very remarkable degree of prescient attention to the probable wants and wishes of future inhabitants, in such articles as staircases, passages, and posterns, *à la dérobés* ; and most certainly no ordinary

English mansion could have afforded such facilities for escaping unseen as that through which poor Adèle had now followed her light-footed guide. Happily no sight or sound startled her in her progress; and it was probably another *nuance* of the same national amiability, which prevented the yawning *cocher*, when aroused by the voice and the touch of Susanne from the *dolce reposo* of his iron step, from testifying the very least possible degree of curiosity at the spectacle of two young girls, each carrying a bundle, desiring to be set down in front of the Chamber of Deputies at half-past one o'clock in the morning.

Having once mounted the rattling vehicle, Adèle felt that the most difficult part of her enterprise was accomplished, and throwing her arms round the neck of her humble, but most able assistant, she kissed her cheek, and thus addressed her,—

“ Susanne! you have this night rendered me a service which, as long as I live, shall never be forgotten. The time I hope and believe will come, and at no very distant period, when I shall be able to prove to you, by

more than words, the gratitude I feel. But for the present, dear Susanne, we must part. I have promised my friend to go with her, and to go alone. I owe you two months' wages, Susanne,—here is the money; and here are a hundred francs more to take you to your mother. If you will take my advice, you will remain with her till you hear from me, which you most assuredly shall do in some way or other ere long. Meanwhile, return to our hôtel, my dear Susanne. Pack up all that belongs to you, and leave Paris as soon as it is daylight. Will you promise me this?"

"I will promise, and I will do whatever you desire, my dear—dear mistress," returned Susanne, bursting into tears; "but I did not guess that our adventure was to end by our being separated."

"It must be so, Susanne; I have pledged my word for it. But it is only for a time, my good girl.—Here we are!—God bless you, Susanne!" And again Adèle kissed her.

"My first duty is to obey you, mademoiselle, and that I will do, though it breaks my heart," replied the girl; and silently com-

plying with Adèle's whispered " Go, dear Susanne, go ! " uttered as the coachman opened the door precisely in the centre of the noble flight of steps which leads to the Gallic palace of wisdom, she sprang upon the pavement, and, after hastily pressing the hand of her mistress with her lips, she darted off towards the Rue de Lille without once turning her head to spy in what direction the *fiacre* proceeded after she left it. But Adèle followed her with her eyes as long as she was in sight, and registered in her heart this little trait of womanly feeling and true sympathy.

The coachman was then ordered to drive on to the spot at which she had promised to meet Sabina and her father; her hand rested on the window-frame next the pavement, and her white hankerchief reflected the glare of a gas-lamp that burnt before the still open door of a *café*. Nearly half-an-hour of agonising suspense followed, which, to Adèle's fevered nerves, appeared so long, that nothing but the evidence of her watch could have convinced her there might still be a chance of seeing those she so tremblingly watched for.

With what intensity of earnestness did she strain her sight in the direction from whence she hoped to see them come. The street was full of carriages of all ranks and degrees, waiting to convey the company from the ball ; but on the *trottoir* there was scarcely a passenger to be seen.

At length it occurred to Adèle, that if they *did* come at last it would be a great relief to Sabina to find the door of the carriage open, that she might shroud herself at once within it ; and to effect this, she let down the glass behind the sleeping coachman, and tugged at the cape of his ragged coat till he was sufficiently roused to understand that he was to get down and open the carriage-door for her.

Just as he had done this, and while Adèle was leaning forward from the carriage to make him comprehend that she wished it to remain open, with the steps down, two gentlemen, gaily laughing, lounged, arm in arm, out of the coffee-house, and stopping within the light of the lamp, to examine his watch, one of them exclaimed,—“*Trop tard? Mais non! —pas du tout.*” And so saying, he drew his

friend away in the direction of the Ambassador's hôtel. It was Count Romanhoff who had thus spoke. Adèle knew his voice in an instant, and drew back, with a sudden movement, into the corner of the carriage. But it was too late, the Count had already caught sight of her face, and stood like one transfixed. But before Adèle could be conscious of this, he moved on, feeling that, as a gentleman, he was bound not to interfere with the incognito of a fair lady, but as thoroughly persuaded that he had seen Mademoiselle de Cordillac as if he had conversed with her for an hour.

At last, and when the almost gasping Adèle had nearly persuaded herself that all hope was past, and that Louis Querin had assuredly given Mr. Hargrave into the hands of the police, her eye caught sight of the tall figure of her step-father, and of the muffled and hurrying Sabina at his side.

They had perceived, even before she had caught sight of them, the still extended handkerchief; and ere the lounging coachman, who was amusing himself by peering over the window-curtains of the coffee-room, could

attend to the summon of Adèle, they were already in the carriage.

“Now, drive us to any hôtel near the Messagerie Royale that you think likely to be open, and you shall be well paid for your patience,” said Adèle to the coachman; to which order the man, now wide awake, replied by an expressive nod, which promised at once obedience and discretion. From the moment, indeed, that he had taken up the two young women, the man had felt quite satisfied that some one of those interesting little affairs were afoot which always ensure extra pay to the fortunate *cocher* engaged in them. What it might be he had not greatly troubled himself to guess. One of the bundles might contain a baby going to the Hôpital des Enfans Trouvés, or two suits of boys’ clothes, in which the damsels were about to disguise themselves for a frolic. In either case he knew he should have a handsome *pour boire* for being patient, and therefore patient he had been; but, on getting sight of the stately figure of Hargrave, who was still pre-eminently handsome, and of the evidently youthful female on

his arm, the coachman's imagination took a higher flight,—an elegant *escapade* appeared, written in silver characters, before his eyes, and the *fiacre* started off with a degree of velocity which, considering the hour, was truly astonishing.

As the distance was considerable, however, the agitated party within it had time to ask and answer many questions. Mr. Hargrave and Sabina had walked through the crowd of servants assembled in the hall exactly as Adèle had directed, and had seen nothing of Louis Querin on their way. That clever personage was, indeed, at that very moment particularly engaged in receiving orders from M. Collet, as to the manner in which he was to dispose of Mr. Hargrave and the ladies upon their leaving the ball, it being decided that the suspected delinquent should be taken into custody before he re-entered his own house; and M. Louis had just promised that he would make the coachman drive in the direction indicated, and, after the police had the gentleman in charge, that he would escort the ladies home, at the very moment that the fugitives

were driving past the *corps de garde* where the consultation was being held.

The delay, which had appeared so interminably long to Adèle, had been occasioned solely by a lingering rubber of whist, in which Mr. Hargrave had engaged, as a mode of escaping the innumerable questionings relative to Madame Bertrand, which met him on all sides.

Had any such assailed him, previous to his tremendous conversation with Adèle, he would have welcomed the occasion for the display of witty *inuendo*, and that sort of wordy fencing in which he delighted ; perfectly preserved, by his matchless skill, from any hits himself, while thrusting right and left, with admirable grace and unfailing effect, against those he wished to attack. But now, the skull of Yorick was hardly in a worse plight than his own. “Where were his gibes now ? Not one left to mock his own grinning—quite chap-fallen !” In this state the card-table was a welcome refuge, of which he had eagerly availed himself ; and notwithstanding his ticklish position, the twenty minutes of delay, which the last *partie*

had caused, appeared less oppressive to him than to Adèle.

It is true he lost his money; and though the stakes were not high, he felt that the gold pieces he so gracefully delivered over to his adversary might soon be greatly needed by him; yet, nevertheless, he would rather have paid them ten times over than have been exposed to the "*Ah ça, mon cher Hargrave! dites moi,*" &c. &c. which he well knew he should encounter if seen wandering disengaged about the rooms.

Sabina, who behaved with a degree of firmness which she often remembered afterward with astonishment, had seated herself in the card-room, from which she never moved, pleading the over-fatigue of the preceding evening as a reason for refusing to dance.

The moment, therefore, that her father moved, she was at his side, and, wrapping herself, as she passed on, in the mantle which she had put off in the last room of the suite, they walked forth together, unchallenged, except by offers of service from the obsequious domestics, which were easily settled by "*Oui,*

oui, merci ; mes gens sont là bas." This, together with the air of haste and *empressement* assumed by both father and daughter, sufficed to ensure their escape.

All this was explained as the *fiacre* rattled on, more rapidly than it has been done here ; nor did it prevent Adèle from employing the interval in making Sabina exchange her white satin slippers for a more substantial *chaussure*, and exchanging the wreath upon her brow for a snug straw bonnet and veil. Her long, dark-coloured silk mantle did the rest, and, when they arrived at the *hôtel* which their intelligent *cocher* had selected for their accommodation, there was nothing in their appearance much unlike that of other travellers. The hat and large cloak of Mr. Hargrave had, also, been selected with a view to his present use of them ; and one of the parcels brought away by Adèle contained what was necessary to convert the very finest gentleman of a Parisian drawing-room into a tolerably unremarkable *voyageur*.

The timid "Where are we to go, Adèle ?" of Mr. Hargrave, found place, also, before the

carriage stopped, and was answered by his step-daughter thus,—

“ Any where, sir, except to England. Fortunately, we may be very sure that Madame de Hautrivate will whisper our destination, such as she believes it to be, to so many of her dear friends, that, ere to-morrow night, half Paris will be ready to swear that we are on our road to London. This, of course, will send us in another direction, and either Germany or Italy might furnish a secure asylum. But, at the present moment, the finding three places unoccupied in the same diligence must, I think, decide the route by which we set off.”

“ Adèle !” said Sabina, with sudden energy, “ you name Germany. Do you remember the half-dilapidated castle near the Mummelsee ? The young man we saw there told us that some of the rooms were habitable,—do you remember, Adèle ?—but that no one had the courage to inhabit them ? Would not this place suit us well ?”

“ Indeed it might,” replied Adèle, thoughtfully, and endeavouring to recall all the circumstances of the happy morning in which

they had together visited the spot to which her sister now alluded.

“Do you speak, Sabina, of the marvellous edifice of which you told me so much at Baden?—the castle that seems to vanish and return?” demanded her father, with a good deal of animation; and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, he added, “Then let us go there, Adèle. The superstitious legends connected with it may be turned to good account in such a situation as ours—as mine.”

“Is not Baden-Baden too near and too public?” demanded Adèle, doubtfully.

“What need have we of Baden?” said Sabina. “Is there not the remote and unfrequented little town of Gernsbach? This would be amply sufficient to supply all our wants. And who among the gay throngs of Baden-Baden will be likely to hear that a young peasant girl, speaking German but clumsily, goes now and then to purchase household commodities at Gernsbach?”

“Perhaps we cannot do better—at least for the moment,” replied Adèle. “Then it must be the Strasbourg diligence we inquire for,”

she added ; “ and Heaven grant we may find three places unsecured !”

This decision was arrived at within two minutes of their reaching the hôtel, and it enabled Mr. Hargrave to inquire, with a tone of very desirable certainty as to whether he wished to go, whether they could have three places in the first diligence about to depart for Strasbourg. A certain *commissionnaire* of the establishment, who had greatly the air of having been exempted by Providence from all necessity of sleep, answered “ Yes,” it being one of his multitudinous duties to ascertain the state of the way-bill at the neighbouring Messagerie before their office closed for the night.

While Mr. Hargrave was thus engaged, Adèle dismissed her well-pleased *cocher*, and the harassed party then retired to their rooms, from whence they were to be summoned in time to breakfast before the departure of the diligence.

That the sisters asked for *one* room for their accommodation will be easily believed, and that then locking the door which secured them

in it, and taking refuge in each other's arms, was the greatest relief—the greatest joy, that either of them was at that moment capable of receiving.

But who that had watched that cordial embrace could have guessed the total absence of confidential openness which wrung the bosom of poor Adèle as she fondly pressed her lips upon her sister's forehead? All, or very nearly all, that made the misery of the elder sister was as utterly unimagined by the younger as if the distance of the poles had divided them. Yet, there they sat, side by side, the hand of one clasped in that of the other, perusing, with looks of love, each other's face, to see how the rude adventure was borne. But all that was in common between them was their mutual love.

In almost any other imaginable case, such conscious delusion, such entire absence of sincerity in every word she spoke, would have greatly increased the suffering of the high-minded and truth-loving Adèle; but as it was, it afforded her the only stimulant and the only consolation which could have sustained her in

her bold enterprise. The very agony she herself suffered, as her mind reverted to all she knew and all she guessed concerning Mr. Hargrave, made the concealing it from Sabina a task that seemed to bring courage with it, despite all its terrible suffering; and when at length she saw her young sister drop asleep on the pillow beside her, she watched her slumbers as a mother might do those of a darling infant whom she had saved from violent and sudden death.

The miserable, dirty, comfortless vehicle, into which the delicately nurtured girls and their guilty protector were to make the tedious journey to Strasbourg, was announced as ready to start at a few minutes past seven o'clock. The eager step with which Mr. Hargrave obeyed this summons made Adèle shudder; while Sabina, who also remarked it, felt her heart bound with a joyous emotion, as she thought that the danger, which the too chivalresque spirit of her beloved father had brought upon himself in support of the exiled family, was so nearly over, and her own bounding step sprung after him joyously.

The tedious, irksome, and most fatiguing journey was got over without interruption or alarm of any kind. At Strasbourg, the party furnished themselves with wearing apparel of very nearly the humblest description, differing little from that of the better sort of peasants or small farmers; and this needful business performed, they proceeded with a *voiturier*, hired for the whole distance, to Gernsbach, where they took up their quarters at a small *gasthaus*, which, though the best in the place, was by no means of an order to consider guests of their rustic appearance intruders.

Sabina being by far the best German scholar amongst them, undertook the task of explaining to the kind and simple-hearted good folks of the house the reasons why their father, who was an English farmer, had been obliged to leave his country from having

“Lost his little all in a lawsuit;”—

with various other interesting particulars of which her imagination formed a net-work for the protection of her father, which she deemed it not a sin to use.

It was agreed amongst them that, as this tale was received with the greatest sympathy and kindness, they should go on to state their wish of finding some little cottage in the neighbourhood which might furnish an unexpensive residence, reserving all mention of the castle till they had examined it, and ascertained whether it would serve them as a decent shelter; in which event their intention might be mentioned as the result of an accidental discovery.

The family at the little *gasthaus* consisted of an infirm old man, who, though the master of the establishment, had nothing to do with it, except bowing his head in salutation to the guests who in winter approached the chimney, and in summer the garden door, where his arm-chair was stationed. All the weight of the concern fell upon his widowed daughter, a stout, buxom, hard-working, light-hearted *frau* of fifty, and her fair-haired daughter, Gertrude.

The most superficial observer, in travelling through Germany, must have remarked the tendency there is in all ranks of the people with whom business, pleasure, or mere acci-

dent brings him in contact, to mix kind feeling in the intercourse. This is the case where there is much less to excite it than Gertrude and her mother found in the desolate girls who now asked for their friendly aid; and, accordingly, the sort of intimate intercourse which established itself between them was very speedily cemented on all sides by a strong sentiment of affection. Harsher natures, indeed, than those of the Frau Weiber and her daughter Gertrude might have been won by the looks and words of Adèle and her sister. There was in the manner in which they both entered upon the business before them so much gentle courage, yet so much innocent ignorance, that it would have been difficult for them to have been seen with indifference any where, and in Germany it was impossible. Before they had been three days at Gernsbach, Frau Weiber would have walked five miles barefoot to do them pleasure, and Gertrude would have run ten.

Little did either of these simple-hearted creatures guess, however, how precious was their kindness or how needful their aid. Little did

they guess the miserable feelings made up of pity and abhorrence, with which Adèle regarded the lately loved protector of her youth, or the agony of tender alarm with which Sabina watched the prostrate spirit of her altered father. Had they known all, however, they could not have done more to comfort them ; for all that genuine womanly kindness or active thoughtful attention could do, they did. Nor were their efforts vain ; for, without their friendly support, it may reasonably be doubted if these fragile daughters of opulence and ease could have got through all the difficulties they had to encounter.

The first day or two after their arrival at Gernsbach, Mr. Hargrave either was, or fancied himself to be, extremely ill ; and any idea, either of leading him out upon an exploring expedition, or of leaving him alone, was equally out of the question. But this time was not altogether lost ; for it enabled both the girls to establish themselves so firmly in the good graces of their hostess and her daughter, as to remove, in a degree which they wondered at themselves, the forlorn wretchedness of being among strangers.

During this interval, both the mother and daughter mentioned so many little dwellings in Gernsbach and its neighbourhood, which were either wholly or in part untenanted, that Adèle felt strongly tempted to abandon this romantic search after the mystic castle, and content herself with such concealment as their remoteness offered. But never, on any former occasion, had she seen Sabina appear so resolute in purpose as on this. With tears in her eyes, she conjured her sister not to give up the project which had brought them there, till they had found reason to believe it was impracticable; and though the worn spirit of Adèle would have rejoiced at abandoning further enterprise, that tender pity which always arises in our hearts for misfortunes greater in extent than the sufferer to whom they attach is aware, led her to yield to pleadings in which she thought she saw more whim than reason.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MORNING of the brightest German sunshine seemed in some degree to revive the wretched Hargrave, and he himself suggested the necessity of actively entering upon their search for the profound shelter which he had been taught to hope for. He declared himself, however, perfectly incapable of accompanying his daughters on the expedition which he wished them immediately to undertake, pleading continued illness as an excuse for remaining in his room; but Adèle read in one glance of his now-often averted eye the true feeling which thus made him a prisoner. Terror of discovery lurked in every line of his sunk and altered visage, and the glance he now gave her spoke an imploring petition that she would not urge him to shew himself.

This was more than enough to make her even entreat him to remain at home. Her intercourse with him was become acutely painful, and every accident which lessened it was a relief. To such a mind as hers, the crimes of which she knew him to be guilty made him an object of abhorrence; while care for the peace of Sabina, now become the only object for which she wished to live, forced her to assume feelings towards him so foreign to her heart, that it was most painfully difficult for her honest nature to assume them. On his side, too, the intercourse was terrible. It was no longer love and affection that he felt for her. Such feelings cannot exist without the belief, at least, that they are reciprocal; and did he not know that Adèle, whose admiration he had so dearly loved to win, must loathe him? No! it was no longer tender affection that he felt for her, but a sort of abject and dependent gratitude, strangely mixed with fear. She alone of all his former admiring friends knew of his guilt; and had it not been that he still clung to her with hopes of aid and protec-

tion, he would have given his right hand never to have beheld her more.

It might not have been very difficult, perhaps, for Adèle to guess as much, had she set herself either to watch or to divine his feelings. But she did neither. Sabina was the centre of every thought that employed her mind,— Sabina, so lately the idol of all the bright world in which she had lived—the beloved, the admired, the envied, the desired of so many hearts, now the exiled companion of a guilty felon—loving him in her ignorant innocence more fondly than ever, and even finding consolation under all her sorrows and privations from the fancied nobleness of the abject being who had destroyed her! All this formed a picture so full of woe, that the very soul of Adèle melted in pity as she thought of it; and her own share of the misery was often as completely forgotten as if she did not feel it.

It suited not with the manner in which this castle scheme was eventually to be made known to their friendly hosts, that they should previously make any inquiries of them concerning it.

The two girls, therefore, set forth in search of it without venturing a single inquiry as to what direction they were to take. But the impression left upon the mind of Sabina concerning its locality was wonderfully clear, considering the manner in which she had seen it. She knew that though not on the road to Baden, it lay between Gernsbach and that place ;—she knew, too, that it was neither on the level of the Mourg, the lovely stream on which the town was built, nor yet upon the summit of the bold hill above it. All this she explained to Adèle ; and therefore, on quitting Gernsbach, which they took care to do on the mountain-side of the river, they turned their steps from the precipitous road which descended from it along the corn-fields which spread along the sides of the declivity.

Poor girls ! their young feet stepped lightly over the undulating path, and their spirits were braced to great energy by the importance of the enterprise they had undertaken ; but the hearts of both were sad. It was not the contrast of this rough walk with the luxury of the conveyance which had before brought them

within sight of the object they were now so laboriously seeking ; nor the coarse garments, in which they looked like pearls encompassed with a setting of iron ; nor yet the absence of the admiring eyes in the presence of which they were wont to move, like stars of brightness along the unclouded vault of heaven ; it was none of all this that made them sigh as they pressed each other's arms while they walked on in silent musing. Each had her separate and her different cause for sorrow ; and though the elder was incomparably the most miserable of the two, the younger felt her spirit bent to the very earth as she remembered the sunken eye and languid smile with which her father had received the caress she bestowed upon him at parting.

For above two miles their path lay so plainly in the direction which Sabina wished to follow, that there was no need of consulting each other as they followed it ; and during nearly the whole of that distance Adèle enjoyed the doubtful advantage of uninterrupted meditation on all her various sources of unhappiness. Had Coventry received her note ? Did he at length

know, or, at any rate, had he at length reason to believe, that she was not the heartless and capricious thing she had appeared to him? Where was the good and faithful Roger? What would be his feelings on returning from the too-zealous enterprise she still attributed to him, upon finding that they were gone, none knew where? And this concealment, so painful, indeed, in the case of their attached old servant, but so vitally necessary to their preservation, as to all others, could they be secure that it would continue? The thought that there might be a possibility of all their efforts being vain,—that the lynx-eyed police might find them even here,—that discovery, shame, conviction, and death, might dog their guilty companion, and find him, despite of all they had done or could do to conceal him, shot through the brain of the unhappy girl with such keen agony, that she groaned aloud.

“Alas, Adèle! my dearest, dearest sister! how grievously must you be suffering to utter such a sound as that! Are you wearied, Adèle? or are you frightened at our loneliness?”

“Forgive me, sweetest!” replied the con-

science-struck Adèle, shocked to think how ill she was performing the task she had imposed upon herself : “ I was thinking of our dear old Roger and poor Coventry. But I will be so silly and so selfish no more. I am not in the least tired, Sabina. Which of those two paths, think you, should we follow now ? ”

“ Perhaps, Adèle, you think the search for this remote shelter unnecessary, and even childish ? Perhaps you think our better course would be to take steps that Roger may know where to find us ? It may be, I do think, Adèle, that the terror of pursuit which first seized us, however reasonable it might be in France, ought greatly to be softened here. It is not very likely—is it ?—that the government of Baden should be greatly on the *qui vive* to seek out persons suspected only of being hostile in their wishes to the present dynasty of France ? If, indeed, we find this wild place capable of being converted into a tolerably comfortable residence, we may persuade my dear harassed father to inhabit it for a time ; but if not, I am quite ready, Adèle, to give it up, and to persuade him to look out for some-

thing where you would feel less miserably forlorn."

"No, no, Sabina! you are wrong,—quite wrong," cried Adèle, earnestly, while a tremor ran through her whole frame. "Believe me, dearest, we might be leading him into great danger were we for a single moment to relax our efforts to keep him concealed. It must not be thought of! Let us walk stoutly on, Sabina: and God grant that this strange castle that we used to jest about may speedily be visible to our eyes, but unseen, if possible, by all the world beside!"

Thus urged, Sabina again started forward in the path which she fancied the most likely to lead them right, for again she felt as eager as ever to secure the sort of almost supernatural protection which she fancied this lonely place would furnish. Fortunately for her sister, Sabina had never inquired as to the particulars of the political plot in which she believed her father to be entangled. She shrunk from the idea of knowing what even in her dreams she might betray. But her confidence in the judgment of Adèle was unbounded, and perceiving

that she thought all possible precaution necessary, her fancy for the mysterious castle again returned upon her with all its first strength, and she would almost have thought herself guilty of all her father's danger had she relaxed in her efforts to obtain what she firmly believed would be the greatest security. But the nature of the ground they were upon almost baffled her determination to supply Adèle's avowed ignorance of their route, by the aid of her own fanciful ideas concerning it; for the uneven surface they were passing over was sometimes raised so high, and at others dipped so low, as to make her change her opinion every five minutes as to whether they were right or wrong. At length, however, they reached the top of one of these swelling hillocks, which, to Sabina's great joy, was high enough to give them a distinct view of the little lake known by the name of the Mummelsee.

“There it is!—there is the Mummelsee!” she exclaimed. “Now, Adèle, I know we are right. There (raising her right hand) is the mountain; and there (pointing with her left)

is the lake. Now then, observe, our castle must be somewhere between the two. Do you see any object, Adèle, as far as the lake extends, that looks at all like a castle?"

Had Adèle been in better spirits she would certainly have replied, "Nothing! yet all that is I see;" but now she only shook her head, and replied, "I think you must be mistaken, my dear, about the place, there is certainly no castle there."

"And so you thought, Adèle, when you looked down from the rocks above, now nearly a twelve-month ago. Do you not remember saying then that you were sure there was no castle there? And yet, within a few hours of your saying so I saw, as plainly as I see you now, a vast edifice of stone, exactly upon the spot we had looked down upon."

"The curly-haired young man told you so, my love," returned Adèle, with a faint smile. "But I do not think it is very certain that you saw it yourself. Do you?"

"Oh, Adèle! Do you really think I would have made you take this long walk had I not been quite certain that there was neither fancy

nor delusion in the case? Be sure—be very sure, there is a castle somewhere *thereabouts*,” said Sabina, pointing towards a spot at which nothing was visible but one of the sudden little hills, of which they had already climbed so many.

“Then let us go on, Sabina,” replied her sister, with renovated spirit: “this is not an hour of such idle talk as that when last the existence of this peep-bo edifice was discussed between us; and I feel as sure of your being in earnest now, as I was doubtful of it then. I almost wish, Sabina, we might see the curly hair again, he would tell us all about it directly.”

“You would pass by without knowing him if he stood here in the path before you,” returned Sabina, with a melancholy smile and varying cheek.

“Oh, no! I should not,” returned Adèle, laughing. “Though I will confess that I believe you looked at him with more attention than I did. But I declare that I think I should know him by the same sort of features which the enamoured lady points out in the song:—

‘Oh ! by his pilgrim hat and staff,
And by his sandal shoon.’”

“Ah ! there it is,” said Sabina, in an accent of reproach ; “you saw his dress, and nothing else, and therefore, were he to appear before you in another dress, you would pass him by as one you had never seen before, or else——.” But these last words were inaudible.

“I think it is very possible I might,” replied Adèle, with a sort of mock gravity that made poor Sabina sigh, by recalling the gay tone of other days. “But there is a reason for that,” added Adèle ; “for his dress really was remarkable : it was something between a hunter of the Alps on the stage and a real *boná fide* German botanist in a forest. So no wonder I remember it.”

“Oh, dear no ! I am not at all surprised that you should remember his dress,” returned Sabina ; “though I may be a little so at your remembering nothing else.”

Adèle turned suddenly round as she walked to look at her. It was the first time that she had thus openly avowed that on herself the impression made by the young stranger’s

appearance was deeper than ordinary ; and the downcast eye and glowing cheek she encountered increased her surprise. She again answered gaily however, saying, “ Yes, but I did, Sabina. Have I not always remembered his curly hair ? ”

“ Have you never seen any one since whose hair was the same ? ” said Sabina. “ Have you never met any one in Paris who struck you as very like him ? ”

“ No, dearest, I cannot say that I ever did. But, by the question, you have, I presume. Who was it, Sabina ? ”

“ Prince Frederic of *****,” replied Sabina, gravely.

“ Prince Frederic of ***** ! Surely, dearest, you have lost your wits, or say this only to amuse me by its out-of-the-way incongruity. The one, saving your presence, having very much the air of a handsome peasant boy, and the other, that of the most accomplished prince in Europe ! ”

“ Adèle,” returned her sister, “ I know not how it happened that I never told you of it, but do you remember when we stopped the

carriage for the second time upon the mountain-road?—do you remember that when I got out, you refused to accompany me, and that I went to the rock alone?"

"Yes, dear, I remember it perfectly," was the reply.

"Well, Adèle, I saw him again then."

"Saw whom?" demanded Adèle, with one of her own smiles, "Prince Frederic of *****?"

"I could almost think so," said Sabina.

"There is certainly some very mysterious influence in yon lake of the Mummel folk," replied Adèle; "for I remember thinking that your head wandered a little when we were near it last, and now I am quite sure of it."

"Yes," said Sabina, sadly, "my head wanders now, Adèle, from the present to the past: I cannot account for it. But the idea that Prince Frederic and the young man seen upon that rock are the same, returns upon me at this moment with a force that I can no way explain. It is very strange. Is it not very strange?"

"Strange, you mean, that such an idea

should occur to you at all. It surely is,—*very strange*. But what do you mean, my dear, by talking of its returning upon you? You do not mean to say that such an idea ever seriously suggested itself to you at Paris?"

"It did once, Adèle, and then I asked the Prince if he had ever been at Baden. Upon which he shook his head, in token of denial as I thought; and immediately after his whole manner changed, and he spoke, and looked, and moved, so like the noble gentleman he is, and so unlike the humble swain I had dared to fancy him, that I felt quite ashamed of myself, and never again permitted my thoughts to take the same direction. But now, in spite of myself, it comes back upon me. I remember so freshly, as I look out upon that lake, and the hills beyond it, the countenance I saw when last I looked upon them, that I could almost fancy I saw it still, and that it was the same, and no other, as that of Prince Frederic."

"And now, dear love, dismiss the idea again as fast as you can," said Adèle, "for trust me it is worthless and unsound.—But, mercy on me! What have we got here? A castle, sure

enough, and, ruinous though it be, a most enormous one!"

For the last few minutes of the foregoing conversation the sisters had been toiling up the abrupt acclivity of one of the little hills before mentioned, and having reached its summit, perceived immediately before them, but at a much greater depth than that to which the ground sank on the side from whence they came, a widely extended edifice of stone, in a state of rapidly approaching dilapidation, but bearing every appearance of having once been a princely residence.

"That yon castle should be completely invisible from Gernsbach and its neighbourhood, is satisfactorily explained by this bold and lofty mass of rock," said Adèle, gazing at the picturesque scene before her with equal surprise and pleasure. "But why it should be concealed from the eyes of those who stand on the cliff above it on the other side, I can by no means conjecture. It seems impossible."

"Yet you yourself, Adèle, stood on a projecting promontory of that cliff, and saw no castle," said Sabina.

“Most true, I did so stand, and most true is it, also, that I saw no castle. But, Sabina, look down from hence, here, close to the very edge of this fine precipice, and I think you will be able to guess at the explanation of the mystery. Do you not perceive that a wild fosse runs entirely round this deserted château? Depend upon it, that the fairies who have driven the Grand Ducal mortals hence, and then thought proper occasionally to conceal the spot once honoured by their residence from ordinary eyes, haunt the place in the shape of vapour, mist, and fog,—all very poetic forms, you will allow, and exceedingly appropriate to this particular region. But, all jesting apart, can you not easily conceive that on a foggy day the evaporation from that stagnant water, finding it impossible to make their way into upper air through the already moisture-charged atmosphere near the lake, may settle down in the form of a heavy veil upon these turrets and domes in such a manner as to make them quite invisible?”

“I do, indeed,” replied Sabina. “And though this explanation, with a power as

strong as that which occasionally removes the mist, blows away a vast deal of shadowy poetry before it, I readily welcome it. And now that we understand all about it, let us try to get down to it—shall we, Adèle? It is quite evident that, though deplorably out of repair for a princely residence, there must be a multitude of rooms within its wide extent which would still afford a dwelling."

"And it may be a very commodious one, too, particularly through the dry months of summer, which are now approaching," replied Adèle. "I really think that your notion may turn out at last to be very valuable, for if any superstitious prejudice really exist against this remote shelter, it would render it invaluable to us. But as to getting down to it from the spot where we now stand, I am afraid it is impossible."

"There must have been some approach to it, and we must set about finding in what direction," said Sabina, changing her position again and again, by springing actively from rock to rock. "As to the approach that has been," said Adèle, remaining stationary, and

sheltering her eyes with her hand, so as to enable her to "look out afar," towards Baden-Baden, "I fear that I perceive it very clearly in the very last direction where I would wish to find it, namely, approaching in very stately style, between two rows of poplars, from the bath of baths. My only hope is that, broad as the way looks, it may no longer be very practicable, and, moreover, that we may be able to find some humble and near access on the side of our quiet, friendly Gernsbach."

"But which way will you turn to find it?" asked Sabina, by this time quite convinced that the château was impregnable by a direct descent from the rock on which they stood.

"My counsel is *reculer pour mieux sauter*," said the elder sister. "Let us walk back a little, and I think the chances are that we shall find we can get down to the level on which this huge building stands without breaking our necks by attempting to descend this unpromising rock."

In pursuance of this opinion, the two girls, too much excited at this moment to remember their fatigue, turned back towards Gernsbach,

but by means of seizing upon every opportunity which the ground afforded for getting lower and lower on the side of the hill which sloped towards the Mummelsee, they succeeded, in very satisfactory accordance with Adèle's prediction, in getting to the level of the lake ; and having achieved this, a path that had evidently been once widely trod, but which was now but faintly visible, led them by the most direct line possible, from the shores of the little lake to a small postern entrance, where a rickety bridge for foot-passengers crossed the moat, and conducted them to the offices of the *ci-devant* Grand Ducal residence.

Short of absolute, total, and entire devastation, there is nothing which gives to an edifice that has once been the dwelling of man so complete an air of ruin and desolation as the creaking hinges of a long-unfastened door. It was by such a portal as this that the two daughters of the high-born Adèle de Tremouille found their way into the forsaken building wherein they hoped to hide that noble lady's much-loved husband ; and such was the urgent necessity for concealment which pressed upon

the hearts of the two motherless girls, that upon a look and word being exchanged on discovering this symptom of utter abandonment, they both as by one common impulse exclaimed,—

“Thank God! if we can but find a shelter, there is no one who will disturb us here!”

Fortunately the sun was still high in the heavens; and the light breath of spring having dispersed the vapours which heavier seasons generated, the broken casements, as they passed along, let in upon them nothing but gentle warmth and invigorating freshness; so that their long passage from the inferior to the superior chambers rather augmented than diminished their earnest hope of finding a habitable shelter within the forsaken walls.

As they continued their progress, however, they naturally confessed to each other that there could be nothing to wonder at, in a land whose sovereign possessed residences innumerable, and boasting among them of almost every possible species of attraction, that the dwelling through which they were now passing should be left to desolation and decay.

“I suspect,” said Adèle, “that in days of yore the now quiet little town of Gernsbach might have been a place of sufficient consequence to look for the inspiring effect of the sovereign’s presence near it for a week or two in every year. But whether the little town fell into atrophy and weakness, and so let go its hold of the Grand Duke; or that the Grand Duke, finding that he could bear these dismal walls no longer, forsook the little town, and that it has faded and dwindled away in consequence, demands a more learned chronicler than I am to expound; but one or the other has been the case, depend upon it.”

“Then it must have been the decadence of the town that led its prince to think his presence might be more beneficial elsewhere,” replied Sabina: “for I never can believe the sovereign owner of this noble dwelling, with its sublime air of solitary grandeur, would ever have forsaken it in mere distaste. Look through that long line of open doors, Adèle. What a splendid suite! Fancy them richly hung and brightly furnished, and then say if they would not be a dwelling worthy of a

prince! I think I know one who fancied them so."

Adèle smiled, and shook her head: "You never knew any such person, depend upon it. But, mayhap, it may amuse you, Sabina, so to people this desert, if indeed we are to shelter ourselves within its citadel. But do you think it will be possible?"

"Why not, Adèle?" returned the other, with some quickness. "Here are a multitude of rooms in perfectly good repair; and among that quantity of dilapidated old furniture that we passed in the smaller rooms before we entered upon this noble suite, I doubt not we should be able to find chairs and tables, beds and boxes, and all other needful commodities for our temporary hiding-place; unless, indeed, you think, my dearest Adèle, that poor papa would find it painfully dismal for him."

The fair brow of Adèle contracted by a sort of involuntary impulse, and she answered with quickness, "The difficulty will not lie there, I imagine." But immediately checking the feeling to which the idea of her step-father's wish for a gayer residence had given rise, she added,

“ But how, Sabina, are we to obtain permission to occupy these rooms, and make such free use, as you suggest, of the old furniture within them ?”

“ If what the—if what that young stranger said be true,” replied Sabina, after a moment’s meditation, “ there are superstitious terrors connected with this place, which would render our entering it a matter of very light trespass. Go where we will, Adèle, some human beings must be in our confidence, or we must perish. May I not then speak to my friend Gertrude on the subject? I believe that pretty girl loves us already, Adèle, well enough to serve us more faithfully than so short an acquaintance would make it reasonable to expect ; and I confess I should not feel the least afraid of trusting her,—should you ?”

“ No, I should not. Her circle of gossips must be so small, that I doubt her power to harm us even had she the wish ; and that her feelings are all made up of truth and kindness to us, I am as sure as you are,” replied Adèle. “ But alas !” she added, with a heavy sigh, “ how easy of achievement do things appear at

a distance, which when we draw near and set about their accomplishment prove full of difficulty. Oh dearest Sabina! we have much to do; and helpless fine ladies as we are, how shall we set about it? Food, fire, beds, attendance—things that as yet have seemed to come to us like the air of heaven, unsought for and yet found. God help us, my poor Sabina! we have much to learn. As far as courage and enterprise, and such ladylike qualities could carry us, we have done very well. Our being here, apparently in undisturbed possession of what I question not is a Grand Ducal residence, and haunted by fairies besides, is no bad proof of this. But for the detail of daily existence, alas! alas! where are we to begin?"

"Will you trust this to me, my darling Adèle?" cried Sabina, eagerly. "Have you not done enough? Our marvellous escape—which even now seems like a dream—did *you* not do it all? Then is it not my turn? Besides, what seems difficult and irksome to you will be but delightful occupation to me. The idea of inhabiting this wild place has

something in it which inspires me. I even doubt if on my own account I shall long be able to regret the monotonous routine of Paris. The Prince was not at *my last ball*, Adèle. He told me when we left the supper-table, on what was probably the last *very* happy evening of my life, that he should see me but once again before he left Paris: this was to have been at his own *fête*, you know. But Providence forbade that interview from which my poor father expected so much. But these dreams are all over now, Adèle; and what can be so likely to cure me of remembering them as making me your active *ménagère*?"

At the moment Sabina began speaking they had reached in their progress through the long suite of rooms on which they had entered one which had still various articles of faded furniture in it. Their progress through the perspective of open doors which Sabina had observed upon led them, *of course*, before a long line of windows, which looked out upon the Mummelsee lake, and the bold outline of lofty hills, dark in their "Black Forest" clothing, beyond it. Here they paused as by tacit but

mutual consent ; and seating themselves upon a mighty sofa, which seemed to stretch out its massive arms to invite them to rest, Sabina was tempted to talk and Adèle to listen, till both had quite forgotten how strange was the place in which they thus reposed, and how strangely they had taken possession of it.

“What do you mean, Sabina ?” said her sister when she ceased speaking : “what was it your father expected from that meeting ?”

“*Your* father !” repeated Sabina, reproachfully. “Adèle ! you never used that phrase before. Why do you not call him still papa ? You do not feel that he is less your father because his exalted feelings have led him into danger ?—that is impossible.”

“Quite—quite impossible !” replied Adèle. “The phrase meant nothing, dearest, and was uttered totally without thought. What in truth occupied me was the question that I asked, Sabina ; and that you do not answer. What was it that papa expected from that meeting with Prince Frederic ?”

“If any other than papa had said it, or any other than you had asked me to repeat it, I

should be ashamed to do so. But whatever papa says to me you have a right to hear, my own sweet sister, and you will not laugh at me when I repeat his words. He said, Adèle—papa said—that, did Prince Frederick ever speak to me of love, it could only be—But mercy on me ! I am telling you this as if I had some doubt of it, and Heaven knows I would rather—far rather die, than believe the contrary ! But what I do *not* believe possible, Adèle, although my father did, was that Prince Frederic should ever speak to me of love at all!"

"But if he ever did, my father thought it could only be in the hope of making you his wife?" said Adèle, supplying the deficiencies of her sister's explanation. "Of course there can be no second opinion on that point. But, dearest Sabina, though that point is not doubtful, another is. I own that I have often thought Prince Frederic did more than admire—I have thought that he loved you, Sabina. But, dearest, he is the son and brother of a king ; and in that rank love has rarely any thing to do with marriage. His never

having breathed a word of love to you does him the highest honour. Royal and loyal heart! may he recover the peace which his visit to Paris has perhaps shaken! He deserves to be happy, and I trust will be so when time has healed the wound. But at the same time we have learned his honourable feeling, we have learned his purpose too; and when he told you that his purpose was to leave Paris, he told you also that you would meet no more."

"I know it, dear, dear Adèle,—I know it! I repeat it to myself incessantly, night and day, that I may never forget it. And now, dear sister, having said so much, do you not feel that the best thing I can do is to employ myself? Will it not be wise and kind to let me be the active busy body? I do so wish it, Adèle!"

"Bless you, sweet love! I will not hinder you. But how will you set about it all, Sabina? I have brought my pearls, which, as you know, are worth some thousands sterling, and some other trinkets too; but I know not how we are to convert them into cash; and of

money I have very little, not more than three or four hundred francs, and this will not go far, for you must hire assistance as well as purchase necessaries. Do you think it would be possible to employ Gertrude to sell some of the lesser baubles at Baden without danger of discovery?"

"I think we might venture to employ my friend Gertrude in any way, Adèle, and that, too, without any fear of discovery; for I believe her to be a very sensible girl, with as much discretion as kindness. But trouble not yourself about selling trinkets and other such heroine-like devices, sister mine, for it needs not. When you left me alone with papa yesterday, while you went to perform some notability upon our new wardrobe in our chamber, I, having my head full of my house-keeping projects, ventured to break in upon his political musings by asking if he had contrived to bring away any money with him from Paris; stating as my reason for this rather new sort of provident anxiety on my part, that I did not suppose it would be possible to render the shelter we hoped to find in this forsaken château habitable without some trifling expenditure.

“ ‘ Let not the want of that stop you, Sabina,’ he said with such earnestness of manner as plainly shewed his anxiety to get here,—‘ let not that stop or impede you in any way,’ he said; and then from beneath the pillows of his bed he drew forth two bags, such as bankers send, you know, with their five-franc pieces; one of them he put back again, so I know not what was in it; but the other he opened, and shewed me that it was full of gold. Is not this good news, dearest?”

The news could not certainly be called bad news, inasmuch as all the evil it brought with it had been guessed at and endured before: yet Adèle felt a cold tremor run through her frame at this mention of a “ *bag of gold*;” for it brought back to her memory a whole host of terrible thoughts, which through the last few wretched days had, one by one, come to torment her in the fearful twilight of doubt and dread that present circumstances seemed to shed upon others that had gone before. The quantity of gold coin she had seen in her step-father’s possession, while he so positively stated that he had it not, together with the sickening recollection of Count Romanhoff’s narrative

concerning the outrage committed on the successful players on their return from the *salon de jeu*, all rushed into her mind together, and she shuddered perceptibly from head to foot.

"You are taking cold, my dearest Adèle!" cried Sabina, suddenly starting up: "these long-deserted rooms feel damp to you: let us leave them instantly."

"Yes, I am cold, I believe," said Adèle, drawing one deep breath, and struggling to recover herself, "but it will go off as we walk home."

"What a thoughtless trick it was to sit down and tell you such long stories here!" said Sabina, taking her sister's arm, and leading her away. "Why did you not stop me, Adèle?"

"Because I listened to you with too much interest to remember where I was," she replied. "But we will go now, Sabina, for the place must be damp, I should think, till fires have been lighted and windows opened. But when this shall have been done, Sabina, I see nothing to prevent our being very safe here,

if we can but obtain permission to seek a shelter in these forsaken rooms."

"On that point we *must* consult Frau Weiber and her daughter," replied Sabina, in a tone of more decision than she usually adopted on any subject. "For it is clear to me, Adèle, that without the assistance of some trusty friends we cannot possibly avoid running into perpetual danger of discovery; but with such I shall fear nothing. I fancy that I see already exactly how we shall go on—somewhat roughly, perhaps, and in a style most new and strange to us. But if you, dearest Adèle, can bear it patiently for a while, and if our dear father be safe, and if you will let me make myself useful, and if I can find a way to climb up to that dear mysterious spot from whence I first beheld these friendly walls,—oh! I shall be so perfectly contented, and so much—so very much happier than I could possibly be any where else!"

"God bless you for saying so, dearest!" returned her sister, fondly pressing the arm she held. "If this be so, I could soon school myself into wonderful resignation."

In this comparatively happy frame of mind the two sisters set off on their return to Gernsbach, which they reached in perfect safety; the path seeming not half the length that it had done before. But they found Mr. Hargrave waiting for them with a degree of feverish impatience that made Sabina again regret that they had lingered so long in the château. He listened, however, to her hopeful account of it with an eager intensity of interest which at least made her rejoice that she had seen enough of it to have so much to tell.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM that day Adèle, from many motives, and all of them wise and good, yielded to her young sister, Sabina, the helm of the little vessel in which they were embarked ; not, however, sitting idly beside her, but giving her assistance only as an aid, and not as a general. In the first place, poor Adèle felt that the heart of Sabina was not sinking within her from any of the miserable feelings which paralysed her own. In every exertion, therefore, which she should make to establish a home with such an approach to comfort as their circumstances might permit, the effort would be calculated to sustain her own spirits, by the impulse of hope and the healthful discipline of activity. Whatever Sabina might

do to increase the accommodation or pleasure of her father, would be like returning to the dearest feelings of other times ; whilst to the unhappy Adèle every thought that drew her nearer to him, was but a misery the more. Adèle felt too, that while she, in actively employing herself to prepare the château of the lake, could only fancy herself an agent busied for the consolation of crime, Sabina would feel all the delightful consciousness of being occupied in the performance of her duty.

Besides all this, it was very evident to Adèle that there was for her sister a fanciful charm about the region they were preparing to inhabit that filled a void in her heart which otherwise might have pained her more. So, for all these reasons, Adèle, lately so boldly enterprising, permitted herself to sink almost into apathy ; and, perhaps, found her best relief under the misery which seemed to have closed around her, in forgetting for brief intervals that herself, with her innocent and fondly-loved sister, were doomed to companionship with crime, by transporting herself in thought to the side of the lost Coventry,

and listening in fancy to the voice that she never—never could hope to hear again.

All, however, that Adèle had lost in activity Sabina seemed to have gained ; she became notable, active, and energetic ; and it was evidently with pleasure that her father remarked the important share she was taking in the preparations for his removal.

What Adèle de Cordillac had done to save her sister from the agony of learning her father's guilt was as precious in effect to him as to his innocent daughter. Before his preserver, however, his spirit was bent to the very earth ; and though he well knew that she had saved him, his gratitude bore no proportion to the suffering produced by the conscious degradation into which he had fallen. Perhaps he guessed also that his safety, and such delusive sort of credit as she had contrived to mix with the reports which must of necessity follow his departure, were valuable to her less for his sake than that of Sabina. In short, she had “out-lived his liking,” and great was the relief when his own child, ignorant of his guilt, and loving him, if possible,

more devotedly than ever, put herself forward as the one who was to manage every thing for his comfort, and consult with him on the means still remaining in his power to ensure it.

It was Sabina, then, who undertook the task of ascertaining from their friendly hostess how far it might be advisable to apply for permission to inhabit the rooms they had seen, or how far it might be possible to take temporary possession of them without it. All she asked of Adèle was that she should be present at the conversation on the subject.

As Mr. Hargrave, still pleading illness, preferred taking his breakfast in bed, the two girls were left in possession of the "upper chamber, swept and garnished," which was allotted to them as their sitting-room at the little inn; and to this room Sabina (who was naturally the selected favourite of the Weiber family, on account of the great facility with which she spoke their language) contrived to bring both the good *frau* and her pretty daughter as soon as the breakfast was over.

"I do not think the house over the bridge

will do for us, *Frau Weiber*,” began Sabina, “because my father is never happy, and never will, if he lives in very small rooms.”

“Now that is unlucky!” replied the good woman, in a tone of very friendly regret; “for neither Gertrude nor I, for the life of us, can think of any other that would be, as you say the English like to have it, all to your own selves; and I don’t believe there is such a place far or near.”

“Where do you think my sister and I got to yesterday, *Frau Weiber*?” said Sabina, with a smile.

“Nay, then, how should I guess, my pretty maiden? Maybe you walked away along the river-side—was that it?”

“No! that was not it. But will you not think us bold and courageous girls when I tell you that we got as far as the old château near the lake of the Mummelsee?”

“To the Château of the Lake!” said the good woman, crossing herself.

“To the Château of the Lake!” echoed Gertrude; “not close, not very close I hope, my dear darling young lady?”

“ Nay, but we did—we got into it, Gertrude !”

“ Into the Château of the Lake !” screamed the mother and the daughter in the same instant.

“ And why not, dear friends ? the fairies love my sister and me—we know they would not be angry with us. There was no chance of our meeting any body else, was there ?”

“ No, no ! I promise you, my dears, no chance of that whatever. Why the very priests are shy of walking near it even in broad daylight ; and I don’t believe there is one to be found, unless, perhaps, it was the Grand Duke himself, who would dare to go into the doors.”

“ That is because the Grand Duke, perhaps, is the only person on good terms with the fairies. They are the kindest little people, you know, in the world to their friends.”

“ That is true, mother,” said Gertrude, very gravely.

“ And you went, young ladies, truly and really into the old residence ?” said the mother. “ Why, it has not been entered by

mortal foot, to the very best of my knowledge and belief, for nearly a score of years. It must have been an awful spectacle, *mein fraulein!* — What dust, what rubbish, what confusion ! ”

“ But were you very sure the fairy folk were friendly ? ” demanded the kind Gertrude, timidly.

“ You shall hear, Gertrude, and judge for yourself,” said Sabina. “ My sister and myself set out as you know upon a walk, and much did I wish at the very bottom of my heart that we might be lucky enough to find some place fit for a dwelling-place for our dear father ! We walked on, and on, and on, a great long way, but never saw any thing the least bit in the world like a château or building of any kind.”

The mother and daughter clasped their hands, looked in each other’s face, and exclaimed, “ Ay, ay ! that is always their way.”

“ But hear,” resumed Sabina, smiling, “ what happened at last. Just as we were beginning to be very tired, and both of us, I

suppose, in our hearts thinking it would be as well to turn back, just at that very moment we saw before our eyes a large, stately building, with endless-looking rows of windows, and the terrace, and the wall, and the statues, and the fosse, all looking so grand and so great, that nobody living could think of going near, much less of going in, without very particular leave given by those who have a right to say yes or no!"

"Oh!—for certain!" exclaimed Frau Weiber, "no reasonable body,—dear young ladies! Nobody quite and entirely in their right mind would ever have dreamed of doing such a thing,—nobody ever *does* do it."

"But listen, *mein frau*; while we were standing, awe-struck as it were, and gazing as if the château before us were just fallen from the heavens, or risen out of the earth, we suddenly felt every kind of fear and terror go away, and a sort of kind and friendly feeling come into our hearts, just as if we had received an invitation to visit the good people who lived there. From that very moment we never had any more hesitation or

difficulty about it. We found our way—Heaven and the fairies only know how—from the top of a very steep rock, where there was no more path than there is up and down the sides of your house,—we found our way, I tell you, as pleasantly as if it had been along a carpet, to the very door of the Grand Ducal residence! We neither of us, I dare say, knew very well how it had happened, but we just looked at each other, and in we walked."

" You did!" ejaculated Frau Weiber, with uplifted hands.

" Mother ! they were doomed and invited to do it," said Gertrude ; " but oh ! mother, mother, don't interrupt,—let us hear all ! Was the door of the residence standing open for you, my young lady ?"

" Yes, Gertrude," replied Sabina, " wide open ; so in we went, as I told you. Just at first it did not seem as if any very great preparation had been made for us. In fact, things appeared to have been thrown about rather carelessly ; exactly, indeed, as I have always heard in my own country that the fairy people do when they are in a sportive

humour and feel frolicsome. But as we went on and got into the grand part of the building, it was quite different. Every thing almost seemed taken away, as if on purpose, not to make a litter. For my own part, I quite believe that the dear little people were afraid to trust themselves with too many playthings ; and that, for the sake of good order, the furniture was most of it put away. However, we came at last to a beautiful room. Oh, Gertrude ! so grand and so large ! And there we found sofas and chairs put just on purpose for us to rest upon, because, at that time, we were both beginning to feel very tired. Was it not kind of them ? I do so love the fairy people, and I certainly believe that they love me. Well, good friends, there we sat and talked, as quiet and comfortable as if we had been two young princesses of the house of Baden ; till, by little and little, the thought came into our heads that we ought to make *that* our home, and no other house whatever ; for that t was as plain as daylight that the little people had invited us.— Don't you think so, Frau Weiber ? ”

The good woman crossed herself for about the hundredth time since the conversation began, and said, "This is a matter that without our priest we could never think to meddle with. I dare not say yea or nay without consulting him."

Sabina looked disappointed, but somewhat awed, and remained silent for a minute or two, when Adèle ventured to remark to their pious hostess, that the very greatest secrecy was necessary in all dealings with the little people, for that their kindness often turned to enmity if their doings were too much talked about.

"No doubt of it," replied the good woman, solemnly; "and it shall be no tongue of mine, nor of Gertrude's either, that shall offend them that way. But it is one thing, dear ladies, to keep quiet about them,—to hear all and say nothing, that is one thing,—but to give my judgment as to your being invited, and my advice, it may be, as to your accepting the same, that is quite another thing, dear ladies; and I may not and must not do it without counsel from the priest."

Adèle answered nothing, but looked at her

young sister as if to watch how she intended to proceed. In truth, this allusion to asking counsel from a priest could not be made before the two sisters without both of them feeling conscious that it was one of the very few points on which they differed in opinion. Both had been brought up in the Roman Catholic faith by their mother, and both remembered to have seen their father abandon the creed in which he was born to adopt that of his wife. This lady, amidst her many high connexions, had the honour of counting a cardinal as her uncle; and as the conversion of Mr. Hargrave took place during a visit to Rome, made about eight years before the death of his wife, it was ever supposed that the holy influence of this venerable relative had produced an effect so highly agreeable to his lady and all her distinguished race. At her death, therefore, she had the satisfaction of leaving her husband and daughters of one faith; and so it was supposed, by the generality of their friends and acquaintance, that they still remained—but Adèle knew, and Sabina guessed, that it was not so.

Fame, which, even in a Roman Catholic metropolis, can, in these happy days, venture to speak of Protestant eloquence, brought to the ears of Mademoiselle de Cordillac such an account of the extraordinary power of a preacher of the French Protestant Church, that her eager desire to hear him overcame all scruples, and, despite the gentle remonstrance of her sister, she left her chair in St. Roch untenanted, and was conveyed to the quiet, modest fane of the Oratoire.

It is a wholesome saying, and, like its fellows, very pregnant with wisdom, that “we cannot touch pitch and not be defiled.” But, with equal truth, it might be said also, that, except to those who are under the condemnation of hearing without being able to understand, it is impossible to be where “light shineth in darkness,” and not to perceive its brightness.

Adèle de Cordillac was not under such condemnation, and as she listened to the voice of truth, uttering the counsels and precepts of GOD in a strain of eloquence rarely equalled among men, her ears were opened and her

heart was changed. Again, and again, and again, she followed this mighty preacher from the Oratoire to Ste. Marie's,—from Ste. Marie's to the Battignolles, and then to the Oratoire again,—till it was no longer in her power to doubt whether it were the stately Popish temples of Paris, or the humble ones assigned to the reformed faith, which returned the purest echoes to the word of God.

Once convinced, it was not in the nature of Adèle to hesitate. She made herself known to the good and gifted man whose preaching had wrought this change in her; and as, although no seeker after converts, he never refused to listen to those who turned to him for help, and to give it with all the energetic devotion of his exalted character, she speedily became one of his flock, and a truly pious Protestant.*

All this was well known to Sabina, but fully

* Though the reverence felt for the name of M. Coquerel must prevent its being introduced among the personages of a romance, it would be hardly fair to the reader not to state that this most eloquent preacher delivers a sermon on three successive Sundays of every month at the chapels named in the text.

proclaimed to none beside. Mr. Hargrave, indeed, was aware that Adèle had ceased to attend the church to which the rest of his family resorted, and spoke to her with his accustomed gentle amiability on the subject; but when she would have frankly answered him, he stopped her, saying,—

“ Excuse me, my dear love, I cannot hear you on this theme. I have alluded to it merely for the purpose of requesting that you will neither make your secession from the church of your ancestors a subject of conversation with our general friends, or of reasoning and conversion with my daughter. On this latter point I am very deeply interested, but must throw myself wholly on your good faith and honourable feeling that my earnest wishes on this subject shall not be violated. You know me too well, my dear Adèle, not to be aware that it would be inexpressibly painful to me, were I to find myself driven to any other mode of keeping Sabina from following your example. And now, my love, we will never recur to this subject again.”

Mr. Hargrave then kissed the forehead of his step-daughter, and left her.

Adèle considered it her duty to obey him, and she did so,—a task which was rendered the more easy by the evident care taken by Sabina to avoid every thing that might be likely to lead them to the subject.

Such being the state of their religious feelings, and such the scrupulous avoidance of every thing on the subject, which was now become habitual to them, this reference of the good hostess to her priest could not fail of producing some feeling of embarrassment to them both. But a moment's thought decided Adèle on the course she ought to pursue. She approached her sister, and whispered in her ear,—

“ You have promised, dearest Sabina, to settle every thing, therefore I shall leave you to settle this ; ” and without waiting for an answer, she quitted the room.

If any thing could have brought a lasting feeling of relief to the harassed spirit of Adèle, it would have been this power of leaving all details respecting their future proceedings in

the hands of the innocent and unconscious Sabina; for so only could every needful step be taken with some mixture of hope and cheerfulness, and so only could she herself be permitted to find that species of quiescent inactivity which was the nearest approach to peace that she could hope for.

With the image of Alfred Coventry in her heart, and all other thoughts as much as possible banished from her head, Adèle wrapped herself in her homely coif and shawl, and strolled out for a solitary walk along the banks of the lovely Mourg. It is hardly possible to conceive a position of more painful contrast with all that had gone before it than that in which she now found herself. Nevertheless there was, at that moment, a species of enjoyment in it. The immediate and galling pressure from without was, for the time, removed. She had neither to look at the man whose presence made her shudder with an eye of feigned kindness, nor close up with unnatural violence every outlet to genuine feeling, lest the poor Sabina, for whose dear sake she endured it all, should catch the bitter truth,

and become still more miserable than herself. For the first time since the storm had burst upon her she stood apart, under the shelter, as it were, of her own pure spirit, and wept and prayed alone.

The conversation, meanwhile, between Sabina and her two humble friends went on in a tone of the most perfect mutual confidence. Nothing could be farther from the wish, and, indeed, the very nature of Sabina, than treating lightly such scruples as they expressed; and though her feeling at encountering a difficulty which she had not expected was that of disappointment, a few moments' reflection brought to her mind the great need she had, and her dear father likewise, of spiritual advice and comfort.

"We should be very glad," she said, "to make acquaintance with your priest, Frau Weiber, and to ask for his advice and spiritual aid. Does he live with you?"

"Hard by the church, young lady,—and a good and holy man he is, and one, too, of high account in his sacred calling. He only comes to our poor town because his venerable

mother, good lady, lives here. Father Mark was born here, and that is the reason he clings so to the old place, though there be bishops and archbishops,—nay, I believe, the very Pope himself, who would be glad to have him."

"A good man is always likely to be a good son," replied Sabina. "I will speak to papa about Father Mark—I dare say he will like to see him; and when he comes to us we can consult him, you know, about the château."

Sabina, who was really as good and pious a young lady as ever lived, was greatly comforted at hearing that she was likely, in this remote spot, to find the comfort of a friendly priest and confessor. The mention of his attachment to his old mother prepossessed her to see in him a man as likely to be valuable to them as a friend, as his holy profession rendered him precious as a guide and adviser, and her sweet face was beaming with pleasure and with hope as she presented herself at the bedside of her father.

"Dearest papa, I have good news for you!" she exclaimed. "Frau Weiber says that their confessor, Father Mark, an excellent man and

pious priest, lives close to us. Shall you not like to see him?"

At the first mention of a stranger whom it was expected he should see, Mr. Hargrave's complexion underwent one of those violent changes to which the constitution both of his mind and body made him liable, and for a minute or two he made no reply. But it seemed that this interval was sufficiently long to permit the feeling of alarm with which he had first heard this news to give way before another, suggested by reflection; for when he spoke, it was to express his very cordial sympathy with Sabina's satisfaction.

"It will, indeed, be a comfort, my dear child," he said, "both for your sake, my Sabina, and my own too. As a holy and anointed priest, I can neither scruple to intrust all the circumstances of my position to him, nor think for a moment of seeing him without opening my heart to him in confession. You, dearest, of course, will do the same; and fear not to avow your knowledge that the sad necessity for our being here arises from my having, with more zeal than prudence, taken part in a plot,

having for its object the restoration of Charles Dix to the throne of France. I am quite aware that, from the nature of the part I have taken in this business, my being given up, if discovered, would be made a matter of state, and would be hardly refused by any country actually at peace with France. For which reason the utmost caution respecting my name, and all other circumstances that might lead to my being identified with the once brilliant Hargrave of Paris, is vitally necessary. On such points as these, our holy religion commands not that we should make disclosures. Remember this, my Sabina,—remember that our only name is Smith, and that of Adèle, Leman. With this one restriction, which has in it, you will perceive, nothing whatever to do with the state of our souls and consciences,—with this one restriction, which my pledged faith to the good cause demands, I would wish you fully to open your heart to the pious man."

Sabina, as usual, listened to him with most loving and dutiful attention, and having promised to conform most strictly to his wishes in all things, proceeded to inform him of the little

supercherie she had practised, in the hope of overcoming the superstitious scruples of the Frau Weiber and her daughter respecting their wish to find shelter in the deserted Grand Ducal residence.

He listened to her, as if feeling that every word she spake was of the most vital importance, and could hardly afford a smile in return for the playful narrative she gave him of her bold assumption of fairy favour.

“ Any thing—every thing, my Sabina,” he said, “ which may assist our getting shelter in a place as much guarded by superstition as by its desolate remoteness, it will be most wise to practise. You say right, dear love, it will be utterly impossible for us to live there, or any where, without trusting to *some one* for the needful supply of necessaries, as well as for domestic service. All you tell me of these good people leads me to hope that they may be safely trusted; and I have little fear that when I shall have seen this Father Mark, he will consent to assist our views by telling his humble penitents that you may venture to

accept the fairies' civilities without danger either to body or soul."

" If you can do that, papa,—if you can but contrive to convince these good Weibers that there is no sin in putting ourselves under the protection of the little people, I should not be at all surprised if I were to succeed in persuading my dear friend Gertrude to take service with us. Oh! you guess not how far our friendship is advanced already. She has confided to me all the particulars of a little love-affair; and, if you thought that we might prudently afford such an expense, I suspect that if Gertrude comes to live with us, her dearly beloved Hans would come too; and then we should have a hewer of wood and a drawer of water without tasking the strength of our own little hands; not to mention that the said Hans could buy and bring home, with the help of his mother-in-law elect, all we should require, and that without drawing upon himself any observation at all."

" Excellent! — admirable! my Sabina!" exclaimed Mr. Hargrave, with reviving ani-

mation. "And have no fears, dearest, about my being able to supply all the money you can possibly require. I have many valuable trinkets with me,—old family jewels that belonged to my mother—stones that I have kept by me because they were unset,—this Hans, if we find him trustworthy, might easily put us in a way to dispose of them, and might take a few at a time, perhaps,—or—the priest himself," he added, musingly. "In short, my love, there is no need whatever that you should fear expense in your arrangements; even my five hundred gold pieces will go a good way in such a country as this. Do you know, my love, whether your sister has brought any valuables with her?"

"Yes, papa; Adèle has brought her pearls, and some smaller trinkets—diamonds, I believe—that she, too, said might be easily disposed of."

"That is all right; and I have no doubt that, between us, we shall do exceedingly well about money. But I would not wish you, my love, to say any thing to poor, dear Adèle about the unset stones that I told you of. If

she knew they were my mother's, it would hurt her feelings should she learn that I was obliged to part with them. Poor, dear girl! though I have reason to believe, from the rank and opinions (as far as I know them) of her father's family, that her political feelings would lead her to approve the act which has driven me into exile, we cannot forget that the unhappy turn which her religious opinions have taken, must prevent her thinking me as fully justified as I think myself, for all I have wished to do for the cause in which I have embarked. You understand me, my dear child, and will abstain, dearest,—will you not?—from naming these old jewels to your sister."

Sabina, delighted to find her beloved father sufficiently recovered in mind and body to enter into this discussion of his affairs, promised most scrupulously to follow his instructions in all things; and presently left him, at his own request, with a commission to their hostess for an immediate summons to Father Mark. "Bid her tell him," he said, "that a penitent, ill at ease, both in mind and body, requests his spiritual assistance."

Few circumstances could be of much rarer occurrence in the existence of Father Mark than the reception of such a message from a stranger. The Frau Weiber, moreover, delivered it with such commentaries on the good mien and gentle bearing of her guests as considerably augmented the curiosity which the novelty of the thing alone was quite sufficient to excite. The good priest, therefore, did but make some slight improvement in his dress ; converting the loose black serge vestment, in which he was sitting at a book-lumbered table in his mother's little parlour, into a very respectable clerical frock, ere he set forth to obey the summons.

The account given by the hostess and her daughter to Sabina of the situation and character of this good man was perfectly correct. There was scarcely, perhaps, a religious society remaining in Europe, into the bosom of which he would not have been cordially welcomed ; for he had produced more than one volume on the immutable authority of the Church, considered to be of merit in the very highest

quarters ; and had only to shew himself at Rome, in order to receive such reward as Rome alone can give. But solitary mystical speculation and his native Mourgthal had more charms for him than Rome and all its glories ; and he loved his old mother better than a cardinal's hat, or even than the chair of the Pope itself. He was deeply and *strangely* learned ; but, more fortunately for the cause which he espoused than for himself, the tenderness of his conscience interposed between the light his mind received from the many sources his reading opened and his faith ; so that in proportion as his reason whispered doubts, his truly honest fear of heresy smothered them into silence. At one period of his life Father Mark had suffered greatly in spirit from the extreme terror into which he fell from the idea that his belief in the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church was shaken. Having the tremendous syntax of his religion as completely by rote as that of his grammar, it never failed to recur to him every time he ventured to indulge in the perusal of the Gos-

pels, and felt the cheering warmth of their universal charity at his heart. Such feelings, however, were in open revolt to the authority under which he had vowed to live and hoped to die ; and literally almost shook his reason by their utter incompatibility with his faith.

That “ a little learning is a dangerous thing ” was very well said, and truly ; but a great deal is still more so, if it be received into the memory of one whose judgment does not keep pace with his powers of apprehension. To such a man every new thought his researches brings home to him becomes a stumbling-block ; for if two conflicting opinions be equally well argued in the pages he ventures to peruse, how is he to choose between them ? Poor Father Mark reeled under the struggle that was going on within him, and for some months lived in a very harassing and painful condition ; being about equally likely to turn Trappist one mood of mind, or altogether to renounce his religion in another. At length this vacillating state was put an end to, during the course of a long, solitary, and most

delicious walk over hill and dale through miles and miles of the delicious region he inhabited,

“ It was the pride, the manhood of the year,
And every grove was dight in its most deft aumere;”

and as he looked from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven,—as he marked every beast, every bird, every insect, yea, every reptile, luxuriating in the joys provided for them by Providence, and felt his own heart swell with joy and gladness at the sights and the sounds amidst which he was created to move,—such a full conviction of the gentle mercifulness of God’s will came upon him, that his very soul seemed melting within him, and the whole scheme of the most holy Inquisition, and all its results, past, present, and to come, rushed upon his memory with all the majestic power of contrast. For one short moment the whole fabric was in very considerable danger of being trampled in the dust by natural piety and common sense; but in the next, the Popish priest stood still, his eyes cast upon the ground the dew of terror bursting from every pore,

and his limbs, poor man ! trembling as if shaken by an ague.

“ And against what is it that I thus dare to lift my impious thoughts in rebellion ? ” he cried aloud : and it seemed to him that the hills around echoed “ Rebellion ! ” “ Authority ! ” he exclaimed, again raising his voice in the deep solitude. “ AUTHORITY, against which the wavering reason of one weak man ought to bend and grovel in the dust. I bend—I bend,” continued the terrified priest, throwing himself upon the ground (without daring, however, to thank God for the sweet freshness of the herbs that received him), “ I bend—I bend,” he cried. “ I know nothing, understand nothing, judge nothing ; but believe all that the most holy authority of the Church of Rome commands and teaches. On every theme but one I will indulge in the use of such faculties as God has given me. But on this, AUTHORITY shall be my sole and only guide ! ”

A vow thus taken in the maturity of manhood, and with such deep conviction of the sacredness of the duty which enforces its being

kept, is seldom broken ; and Father Mark lived and died in the odour of Popish sanctity, without ever again torturing his brain by meditating on the subject, but comfortably reposing every doubt and every fear upon the soft cushion of AUTHORITY. This vicarial sort of faith suits well for those who, with tender consciences, still love their ease ; and for such, is as much preferable to the process of inquiry as the swallowing one pill is to imbibing a dose of rhubarb by single grains. For the rest, Father Mark was a truly charitable and kind-hearted man ; ever ready to lend a helping hand to all who needed it ; pure in his life, regular in his devotions, and ready at a moment's warning to strip off both cloak and coat for the honour and service of the Church.

Considerably within an hour from the time Mr. Hargrave had expressed a wish to see him, Father Mark stood beside his bed, whereon he still lay, though suffering from no other malady than a rather feverish inclination for more self-indulgence than the uncarpeted stone floor of the little parlour could afford. The

appearance of the room where he lay, and of every thing in it, was of too humble a character to suggest any ideas of rank or wealth in its occupant ; the consequence of which was that the manner of the good priest became particularly kind and respectful, all his partialities being in favour of those on whom he thought he could bestow assistance, rather than for the more powerful from whom he might hope to receive it.

To those high in the Church, indeed, his feelings were, of course, altogether different. To them, his deference, observance, humility, veneration, and obedience, were all part and parcel of his religious worship.

Exactly as a burnt child dreads the fire, did Father Mark tremble at the thought of separating in his mind the visible Church of Rome from HIM in whose bosom it professes to be instituted. He had suffered terror to a degree that amounted to agony, from believing, for a few short moments, that he had rebelled against the power of God as manifested in the authority of his Church, and he would gladly have died rather than repeat the sin.

* * * * *

Were it not at this moment my business to go on with my story, instead of stopping to preach a little by the way, I might be tempted to say a page or two on the nice distinctions which, in some cases, divide right from wrong. If I believe in any earthly means of improving the moral and social condition of man, while in his mortal state, it is in the influence of a pious and pains-taking Anglo-Catholic priesthood ; each clergyman being the centre of a small circle, the circumference of which should be within easy reach of his pastoral eye. But one single step taken in a wrong direction at setting out from this rational, pure, and natural principle, suffices to lead the wanderer into superstition, hypocrisy, blasphemy, and the most fearful abuse of power that human annals record.

* * * * *

But let us return to Mr. Hargrave.

Father Mark stood before his humble-looking couch the very picture of charity and gentle kindness. Mr. Hargrave begged him

to be seated, thanked him for his prompt attendance, and expressed a vast deal of sorrow at not being able to rise in order to receive him. To all which Father Mark replied with the most unaffected good-humour, but a little as if he thought so much ceremony unnecessary. His new penitent, the while, kept his eye steadily fixed upon him, his whole soul being intent upon discovering what manner of man he had to deal with.

Mr. Hargrave had ever piqued himself upon his power of looking into the hearts of men, and it was no light object with him at the present moment to get a peep into that of Father Mark. As far as he could judge, however, there was little upon which to exercise his ingenuity ; plain, quiet, simple friendliness being the unmistakable characteristic of the man before him.

It is not impossible that Mr. Hargrave might have better liked a more complicated map of mind. He was more skilled in threading a labyrinth than in finding his way over plain ground, and might, perhaps, have fancied it easier to produce effect in recesses of the

heart but seldom reached, than on thoughts and feelings open to all men.

By the time Father Mark had answered a gentle word or two to all the respectful civility bestowed upon him, and seated himself in the arm-chair set for him by Gertrude, Mr. Hargrave had decided that upon ordinary men ordinary influences were likely to be most effectual, and therefore determined to expatriate a good deal upon his great personal intimacy with the exiled monarch. He accordingly took care to inform the good father that he had been driven from a splendid home, and all the joys Parisian life could give, in consequence of his loyal and devoted attachment to Charles the Tenth of France. He dilated largely on the high rewards that of a certainty would await those of any country who should befriend him now, declaring the success of the plot in which he was engaged certain, provided the party in general, and himself in particular, were shielded from discovery and pursuit.

Mr. Hargrave was very richly gifted with powers for talking with effect. He had hand-

some features, expressive eyes, a pleasing and flexible voice, and a store of words inexhaustible. So, on he went, dignified, pathetic, and conciliatory, prophetic of high events, and abounding in promises of all kinds.

To the whole of this long harangue Father Mark listened with unfailing patience, never interrupting him for a moment, either by word, or cough, or yawn; but his mild countenance reflected too little of the matter he heard for the orator to consider him as a good listener. He was, in fact, at that moment thinking of a little particular spot by the river-side, where, when the sun shone, as it did then, he was wont to find shelter and shade, calm and coolness, for a dearly loved hour of reading or repose, as chance decided.

“Surely the man is a fool,” thought the puzzled man of the world. “But he is a priest too,” added his sagacity, as his eye fell on the carefully close cut of his bright brown hair. And thereupon—

“He changed his hand, and checked his pride,”
as far as his own earthly honours were con-

cerned, and suddenly sounded a deep and thrilling appeal to the interests of the Church of Rome, as being vitally implicated in the decision of this great political question.

Like as a rock, round which storms and tempest, winds and waves, bellow and rush in vain, rendering nothing but enduring silence in reply, is yet found to return an echo, quick, distinct, and clear, if but the gentlest sound addresses it from one mysteriously right direction ; so Father Mark, imperturbable before all else, answered to the mention of the Church of Rome in a tone that at once told his wily watcher from what point he might address him with success.

From this moment the most perfectly good understanding was established between this most incongruous pair, as far, at least, as that understanding can be called good, which on one side is all truth, and all falsehood on the other. If the usually acute Hargrave had erred in deeming the tranquil-seeming Father Mark a fool, his perspicuity now atoned for it by the rapidity with which he dived into the master secret of his character.

Had he known as much as the reader does, concerning the good man's by-gone struggles and appalling fears, he could not have managed him more ably. Before the interview ended, Father Mark felt himself bound, body and soul, to aid, assist, abet, and support Mr. Hargrave, under evil report and good report, in dangers and in difficulties, openly and in secret, to the very utmost stretch of his power and influence, and in utter defiance of all human obstacles of any nature or degree whatever.

CHAPTER X.

IT can hardly be doubted that after this all things went easily with the well-protected strangers. Mr. Hargrave was an actor by nature; and as a squirrel can never be well or happy without climbing (even if it be, *faute de mieux*, a tread-mill), Mr. Hargrave, from a like activity of instinctive impulse, could only thrive, either in mind or body, when he was performing a part. Sabina was delighted, though she could by no means understand the benign influence produced on her father by his intercourse with this gentle Father Mark; while Adèle, who truly believed his conscience to be in a state to torture him into still deeper despondency than he had yet exhibited, began to give him credit for more sincerity in his

Romish creed than she had ever done before, and to believe, in good earnest, that the ceremony of absolution had set him at peace with himself.

It was hardly possible that the good Weibers could become more kindly civil and attentive than they had been before; but something of reverence now mixed with this, particularly towards Mr. Hargrave himself, which, like applause to all performers, increased the spirit of his acting, till, instead of the accomplished Parisian man of *ton*, he became, to all outward seeming, a dignified, sedate, apostolic sort of nuncio-like personage, his credentials known to his confessor only, but the sacred nature of his mission suspected by all.

As to the Grand Duke's dilapidated "residences" (as all his numberless palaces, inhabited and uninhabited, are called), all doubts concerning it were finally settled in the course of the second private conversation held between Father Mark and his new penitent, some passages of which may as well be given as a specimen of the confidential terms they were upon.

“One word from you, my reverend father, will, of course, suffice to remove all the silly scruples of these poor people respecting the fairies and their supposed authority,” said Mr. Hargrave; “and when this has been accomplished, I shall wish to shelter myself, and the holy work committed to my charge, within the remote walls of that forsaken dwelling as speedily as possible. No place, certainly, could have been found so admirably calculated to ensure the concealment upon which the success of this great business ultimately depends.” And in pronouncing the words “great business,” Mr. Hargrave crossed himself with more than usual solemnity.

This action was repeated by Father Mark, with less of pontifical grace, perhaps, but with equal reverence.

“I will take care,” he replied, “that nothing shall be left on the consciences of these excellent people likely, in any way, to militate against your pious wishes, my son. But respecting the Castle of the Lake, would not the manner of your abiding in it be more satisfactory if you were to apply to the Grand Duke

himself?—Even I, honoured sir, humble as I am, could undertake to get this request handed to him if you approve."

"Hush! hush! hush!—my father!" exclaimed Mr. Hargrave in an agitated whisper, and extending his hand so near to the lips of the good priest as nearly to touch them, and so enforce the discretion commanded. "You know not what you propose—you know not what you do! Those, Father Mark, whose names I hold as too sacred to mention, have given me to understand that no temptation, however great—no accommodation, however much required—no false, idle, and merely secular ideas concerning frankness, sincerity, and that species of weakness commonly called plain dealing, must for a single moment be permitted to affect the profound secrecy in which I am commanded to envelope myself. To the Church, and to the Church only, I have permission to open my heart; and were the deserted mansion in question the property of some bishop or archbishop, or even of the most obscure individual who held office as a priest, of any rank whatever, from the very highest

to the very lowest, I would, without an hour's delay, fly to him, as I have done to you, holy father, and open to him at once the secret upon which the safety of the Papal see depends. But as it is I may not do it, for those who alone have the right to bind or to loose my tongue in this matter have forbidden it."

"No more—no more, my son!" returned Father Mark: "I will never again alarm your faithful ear or tender conscience by any proposal of the kind."

Mr. Hargrave received this assurance with a look of thankfulness; but still he appeared greatly agitated, and for some moments no word was uttered on either side. At length, suddenly dropping on his knees, he said,—

"Father!—Father Mark!—it may be that now, even now, in the very act of enforcing caution upon you, I may have sinned against the Church of God. Father! you are an anointed priest, while I am but a poor wretched worldling, sanctified in no way, save in having been chosen by God's vicegerent here on earth, and by one of the holiest of earth's mortal beings, as an humble agent in the mighty

work they have in hand. Absolve me from my sin!—I have confessed, and do repent it!"

"*Absolvo te, my son!*" replied the priest, spreading his open palms above the head of his meek penitent. "And thou art absolved," he added, assisting him to rise from the kneeling position into which he had thrown himself.

"How healing are such words from the lips of one authorised to speak them!" said Mr. Hargrave, reseating himself, and speaking in the tone of one enjoying relief from oppressive suffering. "Is there," he asked, while a charming smile seemed to illumine his whole countenance,—"is there, among the wide multitude of the good God's favours to men, one that can compare to the joy of absolution! I feel like a being newly created to life, and fear not what all the powers of the earth can do to injure me!"

There was something so very touching in the holy fervour with which Mr. Hargrave uttered these words, that Father Mark's eyes filled with tears as he looked at him.

"I shall ever consider it as one of the most blessed events of my life," said the good man

earnestly, “ that I have met with one honoured by the sacred commission which you bear. And blessed—thrice blessed shall I hold myself, if it fall within the compass of my poor power to aid or comfort you.”

“ Both, both, holy father,” replied the humble and grateful Hargrave. “ It is by your assistance only that I can hope to find the needful shelter I seek. As we are even commanded—for so I have been taught—to turn the weaknesses of sinful and ignorant men to the service of our most holy religion, I should apprehend, Father Mark, that we could do nothing but righteousness in availing ourselves of the childish superstition of these rustic people, by leading them to suppose that my residing at the Castle of the Lake for some short time was permitted by the especial favour of the little people who are believed to hold sway over it; and it will be as well to make them understand, holy father, that those whom either I or you may intrust with the secret are, in like manner, distinguished by their protecting favour, but that great and terrible will be the vengeance taken

if they divulge the secret! Will you, good Father Mark, undertake the task of making the Frau Weiber and her daughter understand this?"

Father Mark rubbed the fingers of each hand against the palm that belonged to them with rather a nervous and uneasy action. He was, in fact, in no way pleased by the task thus assigned him. Throughout the battle which been fought within him between common sense and the authority of the Popish Church, and in which common sense had been overcome, by reason of the good man's frightened conscience having taken part against her—throughout the whole of this memorable struggle he had gradually, and one by one, submitted to receive as truths a most enormous quantity of falsehoods; but never, at any period, had he as yet set himself to invent any new lies, by way of proving his own piety or testing that of others, and having, by nature, as little propensity as any man living to this sort of mental exercise, he looked disconcerted at this proposal of bamboozling his worthy friends and pious penitents in the manner proposed.

With his accustomed tact, Mr. Hargrave immediately perceived this, and exclaimed, with accent and emphasis admirably calculated to give his words effect,—

“ How I reverence the feeling that I now see struggling at your heart, holy father! Truth, pure and undefiled, is your bosom’s friend, and the habitual companion of your pious life. Think not, I beseech you, that though a man of the world, a political agent, and, I may proudly add,” he continued crossing himself, “ a religious agent also,—think not that truth is less dear to me than it is to you. I may not even hint to you, holy father, whose sacred profession places you at such an immeasurable height of wisdom above me,—I may not hint to you how often in human affairs one sacred virtue runs counter to another; and that we are permitted by the blessing and the license of our most holy Church, so to manage and arrange these conflicting principles as to derive from them the greatest portion of good; and above all things, to display thereby the strongest demonstrations of obedience to the will of the Church.”

Father Mark sighed deeply, and seemed as if intending to say something; but stopped short, looked frightened, crossed himself, and then turned away his head and muttered inwardly some words in prayer.

“But mistake me not, holy father,” resumed Mr. Hargrave. “Think not that I shall persevere in any measure that my confessor for the time being shall oppose. It will—it must be sufficient when I give account to those I have ventured to name to you, of my various efforts to obey their commands, that I shall plead the averseness of my spiritual guide in extenuation of the failure of this project, which—why should I conceal it from you?—was suggested by no less a counsellor than the Pope himself!”

A perfect shower of crosses fell from the trembling fingers of Father Mark upon his brow and breast, as he listened to these tremendous words.

“Not so, my son,—not so!” he exclaimed, almost gasping for breath to utter his obedience. “It is enough for me ever, and always enough, to know the will of the Church, in

order to make me perform it. I am an obscure and very ignorant man— ignorant of all things save the one great saving law of obedience, and to this I bow ; even to the laying myself, and all the thoughts and reasonings of my sinful heart, in the dust. I will not fail to tell these simple women, my son, that it is their duty to aid and assist you in secreting yourself within the walls of the Castle of the Lake."

* * * * *

Father Mark faithfully kept his word ; and though he did no more— though his simple word of guarantee to the Frau Weiber and her daughter, that it was their duty, and no sin, to assist the Graf Schmidt in taking up his abode at the château, was as unlike as possible to the dramatic sort of eloquence with which Mr. Hargrave himself would have dilated on the fairy favours his two daughters had received, it sufficed to obtain all the assistance wanted in order to effect the project that Sabina had conceived.

The first feeling in the least degree approaching to agreeable which Mr. Hargrave

had experienced since the full conviction of the discovery of his secret proceedings, arose from the perfect success of the scene he had thus acted before Father Mark.

“ What is there I could not do ? ” he murmured to himself in the silence of his little chamber as soon as the pious man had left him. “ If drawing-rooms be closed against me, there are other walks which men gifted with talents, equal perhaps to my own, have not disdained to tread. I must think further on this subject.—Admirable Adèle ! Though her presence makes my blood creep through my veins, till I shudder as I might do at the approach of some dreaded reptile, I cannot but admire the sort of intuitive talent which enabled her to throw so amiable,—so impenetrable a cloak over me ! Will it not be received, in spite of all assertions or surmises to the contrary, that the version of Madame de Hautrivaige—which she will spread unsparingly—is the true one ? Who dare receive it other ? ” Mr. Hargrave smiled complacently. “ There is more yet that may be made of this ; and what matters it under what form com-

manding talent shews itself? The name of a monk may ring as loudly beneath vaulted roofs as that of the graceful Amphytrion of Paris. I must think of this."

* * * * *

The task of Sabina now became little short of delightful; and though poor Adèle, for a thousand reasons, could not share her pleasure, she exerted herself to the very utmost to increase it. She shuddered anew, indeed, as she perceived, though not a word was said about it even by the open-hearted Sabina, that store of money was not wanting to put in action the various little schemes which the affectionate daughter had conceived for the accommodation of her father; and truly Sabina shewed a talent for business in her proceedings which no one had ever given her credit for before.

There was one duty which Father Mark was speedily called upon to perform, which he did with hearty good will, and with no mixture whatever of the repugnance which his spiritual advice concerning the little people of the lake had cost him. He joined the

honest hands of Hans Klopmann and Gertrude Weiber in holy matrimony, thereby making a very loving man and wife, and furnishing Mr. Hargrave and his daughters with all they wanted in the way of domestic assistance in the abode preparing for them.

Gertrude would greatly have preferred gaining her living by taking service with Sabina and Adèle to any other mode whatever, and Hans best liked whatever was preferred by Gertrude ; but Mr. Hargrave was by no means disposed to rest his hopes of their fidelity upon these grounds, and failed not to seek and to find opportunities of conversing with them both, and impressing upon their minds the extraordinary good fortune which had attended their nuptials, in their having taken service on the very day they received the priest's blessing with a family to whom so much supernatural favour had been shewn. " You will be long-lived, happy, and rich," said Mr. Hargrave in very good and intelligible German, " *IF*—remember this important *if*, my good children, — you will be rich,

happy, and long-lived, if you keep faithfully the secret that the spirits of the Mummelsee and good Father Mark have permitted me to intrust to you. But should you fail in this,—should you betray this trust, or even tell to the people with whom you may occasionally converse or have dealings, why it is that you live near the Mummelsee, your punishment will be very terrible."

Much less than this would have done to keep the young couple from amusing their neighbours with accounts of what they saw, and of the very little which they understood, respecting their new master; but it requires considerable knowledge of the perfect faith which is given by the simple people of that romantic region to the local legends amidst which they have been reared, in order to comprehend the degree of influence which such words produced upon Hans Klopmann and his pretty bride. Fondly as they loved—and German peasants can love very heartily as well as their betters,—they would each of them infinitely have preferred burning pretty

severely the right hand of the other, rather than have incurred for both the far greater danger of neglecting the warning thus given.

There was, in fact, but little danger that any eye not particularly interested in finding him should be directed to the retreat of Mr. Hargrave. On further and more deliberate examination of the innumerable chambers of the forsaken residence, it became evident that of one sort or another, there was a vast deal more furniture than the small knot of interlopers who intended to take possession of it could possibly require. For the most part this was of a nature which it required not the aid of superstition to preserve from the depredations of the rustic neighbourhood ; being of a rich, lumbering, heavy character, that would have made it at once difficult of removal, useless when obtained, and bearing most unmistakable evidence of the station of the parties to whom it must have originally belonged ; thus challenging a degree of curious inquiry by no means convenient in cases of violent abduction.

It appeared probable, indeed, from the great

abundance of these fading remnants of former splendour, that the abandonment of this very unattractive residence had been gradual, and more silent and unproclaimed than could have been the case had its still-life inhabitants been made to follow the steps of their errant owners.

Not, however, that Mr. Hargrave, his daughters, or even their faithful attendants, could have taken up their abode, even for a single night, at the château without many essential, though not very bulky, additions to its furniture. But such of these as were purchased either by Hans Klopmann or the Frau Weiber, in the town, were conveyed to the little *gasthaus* either without any remark at all, or such as signified an opinion that the business of the little establishment there was going on prosperously. From thence it was easily removed under the shelter of night to the château; and in this manner every thing thought to be absolutely necessary to a moderate degree of comfort, was provided for the family, before they took their first night's sleep in their strangely new quarters.

There was one circumstance, and that of considerable importance to their comfort, which furnished the observing eye of Mr. Hargrave with doubly important evidence of the assured security of the position. This was the finding an underground cellar of considerable extent, pretty nearly filled from the pavement to the roof with pine-wood from the neighbouring forest, ready cut into commodious logs for burning. This not only gave the strongest evidence that no intruding eyes had ever ventured to spy out the secrets of this stronghold of superstition, even with a view to plunder, while it gave him an opportunity of pointing out to his two followers the obvious patronage of the tiny race, who were celebrated throughout the region for doing the household work of their favourites.

At length the day came when Sabina and her assistants ventured to announce that all was ready for “the flitting.” Herself, her sad but ever-aidant sister, and Gertrude, removed themselves to their new abode exactly at the hour of noon, when no eye save that of the bright sun was likely to be fixed upon

them ; all the world being, for a certainty, engaged in eating their *mittagbrod*. Mr. Hargrave and Hans Klopmann were to follow them by star-light ; Hans being by this time sufficiently acquainted with the route to undertake the office of guide without any other.

If Adèle de Cordillac had wanted any reward for the devoted affection she had manifested towards her young sister, she would have found it in the brightness of Sabina's eye and the glow upon her cheek during the whole of this busy day ; for she read therein that her painful efforts had not been in vain, but that, in spite of the wreck of all the ordinary materials of happiness in the midst of which they stood, the peace of mind which she had so dearly cared for had not been wholly destroyed.

Nor was Adèle herself idle. Under the orders of her notable sister, she contributed greatly to the result which was the great object of all Sabina's exertions ; namely, the giving an air of comfort to the wide and lofty saloon which had been selected for their sitting apartment, and arranging a sleeping-room for

her father that should not revolt his delicate *impressionability*, by any of the wants he had complained of at the little *gasthaus*.

Notwithstanding all this useful activity, however, Sabina, without counting as a cause of woe her abrupt transition from a state of wealth, in which the utmost power of human ingenuity was set in action to contrive luxuries, to one in which equal ability was called for to supply the want of them,—poor Sabina, without counting this, had a thorn in her heart, which, to a less high-minded creature, would have sufficed to destroy activity, health, and usefulness for ever. We rarely, perhaps, know *how* dearly we love any thing till we have lost it; and it is certain that Sabina, in the midst of the varied gaiety of Paris, her heart fortified by the conscious necessity of checking every feeling approaching to woman's love in her intercourse with Prince Frederic, was very far from being aware how infinitely little in her eyes was the proportion his rank held in the general sum of his perfections, or how widely different were her own feelings towards him to those of the smiling crowds

that fluttered round his greatness, wishing for nothing but such a portion of his attention, bestowed before the eyes of all men, as might add another feather to their well-plumed caps.

It was only when she felt that she had lost sight of the young man for ever that she knew, from the pang this thought cost her, how dear —how very dear, he had become to her. But never did an innocent young heart struggle more honestly with its weakness than did that of Sabina when she made this discovery. With as much good sense as right principle, she abstained rigorously from indulging herself by talking of him to Adèle; and the only feeling in which he had part that she did not resolutely seek to smother, was that which made her so eagerly cling to the desolate Castle of the Lake, as the place of refuge for her father. It is true that she did, indeed, believe it to be the safest and the best; but it is true, also, that the persuasion of having seen and conversed with Prince Frederic on the rock above it, had grown, by degrees, into the most assured conviction; and the idea that it was *he* who had told her of its existence while it was still

invisible to her eye, gave a vague but delightful feeling that she owed her father's safety to him, which was the source of such fanciful gratification to her.

It was certainly, as young ladies go, no very trifling or very ordinary degree of right and noble feeling which, in the midst of so much devotedness to the recollection of this young man, could enable her to shake off all that was morally objectionable in the feeling, and remain still not only the fond, but the active and useful child of her unfortunate father.

But not even Adèle knew how much credit she deserved for this; for by no means giving her credit for the gentle but steadfast courage which enabled her to abstain from talking of him, her sister flattered herself that he had left no impression on her mind sufficiently profound to affect her peace, or add in any way to the heavy load of misfortune which had fallen on her half-unconscious head, and which it was the chief study of her own existence to make fall lightly on her.

But though quite unconscious of all the merit due to the gay-looking little manager

for her well-sustained efforts to be both cheerful and useful, Adèle loved her, as she thought, a thousand times more dearly than ever for her practical piety, in thus receiving on her young head the pelting of so pitiless a storm without uttering a single murmur of complaint, or even suffering a shade of sorrow to rest upon her lovely brow. Yet, while contemplating her thus, with a heart overflowing with love and admiration, she groaned inwardly as she remembered *what* that father was for whose sake this dear Sabina was thus ready and contented to bear all things.

CHAPTER XI.

NOTHING could better prove the sagacity of Mademoiselle de Cordillac than the use made by her aunt of the communication she had deemed it prudent to make to her respecting the departure of Mr. Hargrave.

As long as that gentleman and his daughter remained in the *salons* of the — embassy, the good lady had held her peace, though beyond all question it was pain and grief to her; but no sooner had she watched him lead his daughter off, and received from Sabina a soft parting glance, which the gentle-hearted girl could not withhold from her mother's sister, than she began—as she sorted the hand of cards just dealt to her—to sigh very pathetically, and to murmur odds and ends of the

secret of which she believed herself to be the repository.

“Eh, mon Dieu! — c'est à vous, monsieur, à jouer — que c'est affligeant d'entendre des choses semblables!”

“Of what do you speak, madame?” said her partner.

“Hélas! — j'ai tort — j'ai tort d'en parler — jouez, monsieur, s'il vous plaît.”

Then, finding that, notwithstanding her sighs, the game seemed to create more interest than her sorrows, she went on,—

“Of course you all know—I believe (looking round) that I may speak with safety—of course you all know that there has been another most unexpected political combination discovered—the knave was mine.”

But, when requested to explain herself, she went no further than to say that one deservedly dear to her in all ways had most imprudently demonstrated his strong personal attachment to a certain illustrious individual who should be nameless.

“*Mais qui donc?*” was demanded with more eagerness than discretion by one of the party.

“*Excusez moi, je n’ose pas poursuivre;*” and presently added in a whisper, “You will hear enough of it ere long, depend upon it. For my part, I say nothing; I am not incapable of putting a just value upon noble sentiments, and yet I lament, and perhaps do not altogether approve, any attempt to disturb the *aimable* tranquillity in which we have of late been permitted to live. But I can never lose sight of the fact that my illustrious *beau-frère* is the most noble-hearted of men, and, as an Englishman, decidedly *sans pareil*. *Ah! mon Dieu!* Paris will find reason to mourn his loss!”

To all the questionings naturally elicited by these words, and many others of similar tendency, she would, however, accord little more satisfaction than might be found from the repetition of “*Excusez moi, messieurs; je n’ose pas.*” Yet, as soon as they let her alone, she again recurred to it; and before the party was finally broken up and her carriage announced, no inconsiderable portion of the company had become fully aware that Mr. Hargrave was discovered to have been implicated in some poli-

tical intrigue which rendered it necessary for him to leave Paris, in order to preserve his personal freedom.

Any story thus circulated through half-a-dozen *salons*, from mouth to mouth, must inevitably be subject to great variations in its progress, even when the original has been fully and clearly stated. But, in repeating the obscure hints and innuendos of Madame de Hautrivate, there was hardly a possible addition or interpretation which was not added. Some had been given clearly to understand that Mr. Hargrave was in close alliance with Prince Louis Buonaparte, and had received his promise that he should be made Minister of Public Instruction as soon as the Prince found himself firmly established on his immortal uncle's throne. Others were as satisfactorily convinced that Mr. Hargrave had killed a political adversary of the old *régime* in a duel, and that the new *régime* intended to have made an example of him ; while others as confidently declared that France had nothing to do with the business, and that the departure of the elegant Englishman was solely occasioned by his having

received an intimation from the Spanish *charge d'affaires* that the French government would be called upon to interfere in order to put a stop to certain proceedings which were understood to be going on by and with the connivance of Mr. Hargrave, to produce an immediate restoration of the exiled king of Spain to his throne.

The place held by Mr. Hargrave and his beautiful daughters in Paris society rendered all these statements, and any others that could have been circulated respecting him, of the greatest interest, which feeling was, of course, brought to its acme by a loud disturbance which arose in the hall, when Madame de Hautrivaige, having, at four o'clock, inquired for Mr. Hargrave's carriage, and been told that it was *avancée*, walked through the crowd of servants *alone*, or at least attended only by the gentleman who gave her his arm.

Louis Querin, who, by way of being particularly vigilant, had been for the last two hours seated among the servants, with one of the *gendarmerie* beside him, enveloped in his own livery great-coat, started forward the instant he heard Mr Hargrave's carriage called for, with

his official companion at his side, and, with his eyes on the alert, stood ready to watch his doomed master into the equipage, the driver of which had already received orders, from a quarter whence no orders are questioned, to drive the party to a place indicated ; when, after lodging him there, he was to proceed with the ladies of the party to their home.

All this had been admirably arranged,—nothing could be better,—nothing more certain of success ; and Louis Querin had spent a considerable portion of his two hours' watch in calculating the comparative advantages of continuing his present profession of show-servant, or changing it for “a place under the government,” in other words, becoming an agent of the police, which he felt little, or rather no doubt, would be at his disposal, as a reward for his important services on the present occasion.

When this very clever fellow first caught sight of the splendid turban which completed the dress of Madame de Hautrivate, he gave his companion a nudge with his elbow, and both started together to their feet.

“ Is that the man ? ” whispered the agent of police, glancing at the gentleman who had the honour of giving Madame de Hautrivate his arm.

“ Not at all, *mon cher*,” was the reply ; “ that old lady is our sister-in-law ; he will follow in a moment with his daughter, and you will see a beauty, I promise you,—proud little minx as she is. The other, who is prouder and handsomer still, is not here to-night.”

“ Never mind about their beauty, my good fellow,” said the other. “ Where the devil is your man ? I see no sign of any body belonging to your old lady,—and here she comes, looking about for you, no doubt. Put yourself forward, man, and let us hear where her brother is.”

Querin did as he was directed ; and no sooner did Madame de Hautrivate get sight of him than she exclaimed, with great satisfaction, “ *Tout va bien donc !* ” and then added, “ *Ah ça, Louis, ton maître n'est plus ici. Je m'en vais retourner seule. Va voir si la voiture est prête.* ”

Querin bit his lip, and instead of obeying

the command, turned short round to his companion, demanding, in no very happy tone of voice, “*Qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire?*”

“*Faire!*” repeated the official, muttering in smothered anger, “*nous nous sommes joliment arrangés, n'est-ce pas?*” Then, raising his voice to the proper tone of authority, he proclaimed to all who chose to listen that his business there was to arrest a gentleman who was probably concealing himself, but that the individual with whom his business lay would do much more wisely by giving himself up quietly; that he was too well known in all ways to leave the slightest possibility of escape; that his name was Hargrave; and that it was highly advisable that no person should assist in concealing him.

The rapidity with which the purport of such an harangue spread through the *salons* of the —— embassy may be easily imagined; and then it was that the colour which Adèle had given to the affair achieved its object with the *beau monde* of Paris. The shapes in which the story was carried forth, and spread, were as various, indeed, as the tongues which gave

them birth; but the substituting treason for felony was uniform and universal; and the illusion thus produced was sufficient to counteract, with an immense majority of listeners, particularly of the higher class, the effect of the true version of the story, even when afterwards told with the most faithful accuracy; for to such the first crime seemed possible, but the last not; and then it was so natural that every pains should be taken by the authorities to keep secret what, beyond all doubt, was an important state matter, that the sharpest eyes listened with a knowing wish, and the wisest heads with an incredulous shake, when vulgar hints of the truth were hazarded.

“Oui, oui, oui, c'est très-bien—très-bien. C'est mieux que la chose va comme ça. N'en parlons pas. Nous savons, nous savons,” was the style and tone in which the mysterious subject was canvassed from one end of Paris to the other. Nay, there were not wanting some, endowed with peculiarly keen political sagacity, who broadly hinted that the whole affair of Madame Bertrand's disappearance had been got up by the government in order to conceal

the progress which certain principles were making in certain circles.

The buzzing whispers, therefore, which went round and along, and up and down the throng of liveried lacqueys, and in which the truth, if not quite the whole truth, was soundly stated (thanks to the friendly feeling existing between M. Louis Querin and most of the set), was entirely, and altogether, for their own vulgar use, and even if heard distinctly by the noble phalanx of their masters and mistresses, would have been listened to with dignified contempt.

To do Madame de Hautrivate justice, she behaved during the scene in the hall with the most consummate judgment and propriety ; for though, of course, she naturally availed herself of so brilliant an occasion for a slight touch of faintness and fine feeling, she did not lose sight of the dignity which attaches to a trusted friend in a political affair of first-rate importance, and after having received *flacons* from half-a-dozen hands, and made eloquent appeals with her accomplished eyes to all the most distinguished of the friends and acquaintance who crowded round her, she walked forward to

the carriage of Mr. Hargrave, now attending her for the last time, with a step which would not have disgraced a royal heroine when about to yield her neck to the stroke of the headsman.

Among the persons present at this scene, was Coventry's friend, Count Romanhoff. The eyes of Adèle had not deceived her; it was the Count, and none other, whom she had seen before the door of the coffee-house during the terrible interval employed in waiting in the *fiacre* for Mr. Hargrave and Sabina.

This young man,—who though he had not himself altogether escaped the taint of Parisian dissipation, loved and valued, as it deserved, the exalted character of Alfred Coventry,—had exerted, not in vain, the power of his eloquence upon the galled spirit of his unhappy friend, during the first few miles of their drive out of Paris, at five o'clock in the morning of this same eventful day. The result of this eloquence was the obtaining a promise from Alfred, that he would give up the solitary distant wanderings he had meditated, and consent to accompany the Count in a long-projected tour through England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. This

promise once obtained, the Count left his friend's travelling carriage as abruptly as he had entered it, and returned to Paris about five hours after he had quitted it, exceedingly well satisfied with the result of his short expedition, and greatly pleased at having secured for his longer one a companion so greatly to his liking.

Having occupied several very busy hours after his return in setting all things *en train* for leaving the abode which he had enjoyed perhaps too keenly and too long, he dined at the Hôtel de l'Europe with a friend, then dressed, and beguiled away another hour or two, and at the moment Adèle recognised him, was in the act of proceeding with his friend to the ball at the —— embassy.

Fortunately for the fugitives, Mr. Hargrave, in quitting the Ambassador's hôtel with his daughter, took the precaution of crossing the street in which it was situated, for the express purpose of escaping exactly such rencontres as would infallibly have occurred, with Count Romanhoff, had he not done so. Such a meeting, after his detection of Mademoiselle de

Cordillac, hiding herself within the shelter of a hackney-coach, would have sent him into the ball-room with materials for gossip, which would have fallen in well with the scraps of information which Madame de Hautrivate had set in circulation. But as it was, he entered it believing, and well contented to believe, that the fair coquet, who had given so severe a heartach to his admired friend, was engaged in some abominable imprudence (probably an elopement), which would go far towards curing Coventry of his love. So far, indeed, was he from suspecting that her sister or Mr. Hargrave were in her counsels, that on entering the dancing-room, where the orchestra with its echo of “many twinkling feet” were in full activity, he looked round it for Sabina. He was not, perhaps, the less inclined to join in the dance from perceiving that there was no chance of his meeting her in it, and immediately did so with a fair lady, whom he perfectly well knew would have enjoyed it the more, and liked him all the better, had he amused her with an account of the mysterious glimpse he had caught of one who had ranked

as fairest of the fair in that set ; but, to his immortal honour be it said, he did no such thing. When, however, he caught the name of Hargrave, as he was making his exit through the ball, and heard it coupled on all sides with rumours of his political enterprise, the recollection of Adèle's strange position recurred to him, and with an interpretation wholly different from what he had attached to it before.

It was quite impossible that the two circumstances could be unconnected ; and, as he listened to the statement of Mr. Hargrave's having been seen playing at cards till near two o'clock, and having then made his exit with his daughter, as it now appeared, without using his carriage, the obvious fact suggested itself, that Mademoiselle was waiting for her plotting step-father and his daughter to join her.

At the first moment this solution satisfied him perfectly, being, indeed, almost too palpably evident to admit of a doubt ; but as he still stood listening to the various versions of the tale Madame de Hautrivate had circulated,

it struck him as exceedingly strange, that a young lady so perfectly independent in all ways as Mademoiselle de Cordillac should think it necessary to identify herself thus in a political intrigue, which could not be likely to have any consequences more serious than Mr. Hargrave's absenting himself from the French capital. Why was it necessary for her to disguise herself in the manner he had seen? Why should not she follow this step-father, if it was her pleasure to do so, without descending to any such objectionable manœuvres?

Count Romanhoff at first started these questions (which, by the way, were propounded to himself alone) solely from his predisposition to find every thing that Mademoiselle de Cordillac did "wrong and ill done;" but it chanced, that after listening for some time to the hubbub which the officer's demand for Mr. Hargrave's person produced, he was, at length, once more making his way towards the door, when his ear caught a gibing phrase about the cunning trick of the "*les grands messieurs*," in pretending to believe that the *vaurien*, who had so cleverly slipped through

the hands of justice, had only been plotting a little against King Philippe; when the fact was, that he had been discovered to be the greatest thief in Paris, and, as some said, a cruel murderer into the bargain.

This might have been sufficient to arouse the curiosity of a quieter spirit, and one less interested in the business, than was Count Romanhoff; but upon him it acted like fire upon tow, he was instantly in a blaze of eagerness to know what this might mean. That the *vaurien* thus mentioned indicated Mr. Hargrave, he was not permitted to doubt, as the name of that gentleman was audibly bandied from mouth to mouth, among the group to whom the speaker of these exciting words addressed himself. But how was he to learn more? Could the proud Russian noble join himself to the liveried throng and question them? Impossible! No, not even for the sake of having to tell Coventry how exceedingly thankful he ought to feel at escaping so terrible a connexion,—no! not even for this, could he so degrade himself.

The extreme difficulty, not to say impossi-

bility, of finding any one at that hour, except the lackeys, who would be able to give him the information he was dying to obtain, sent him, by the absolute force of necessity, home to bed for the remainder of that night; but most faithfully did he promise himself not to see another till he had made out to his own satisfaction the origin of this discrepancy between the version given of Mr. Hargrave's disappearance by the valets and that put in circulation by their masters.

In consequence of this excellent resolution, Count Romanhoff rose on the following morning full ten minutes earlier than usual; but, while submitting himself to the inevitable delay of eating his breakfast, it occurred to him that he was without any clue whatever by which to guide his researches, and that, unless he stood at the corners of the streets to question the passengers, he had no means of learning more upon the subject which so piqued his curiosity than he knew already.

Considerably vexed and disconcerted by this result of his clear-headed morning meditation, his breakfast, begun in haste, was finished at

leisure, and he even set himself tranquilly to the perusal of half-a-dozen newspapers, when he recollects that, as Madame de Hautrivate had evidently not accompanied the fugitives from Paris, nothing could be more natural, necessary, and polite, than the paying her a friendly visit at the mansion, which he still presumed to be her home. No sooner had this bright idea occurred than it completely engrossed him. If he could but get a sight of that most *bavarde* and silliest of middle-aged gentlewomen, he should be certain of learning every thing he wished to know ; and a stronger proof of the interest which he took in the business could hardly be given than his inwardly resolving rather to make love to her outright than fail in his purpose of obtaining all the information she had to bestow.

He waited, however, with becoming patience till the hour arrived at which such a visit might be made without the certainty of receiving an assurance at the door that Madame was not "*encore visible* ;" but his carriage was peremptorily ordered to the door punctually at the time fixed upon, and when it was

announced, he sprang into it as eagerly as if it were about to convey him to the presence of the most charming woman in Paris, instead of taking him to that of the person whom he happened to think most pre-eminently the reverse.

In the hurried conversation between Mr. Hargrave and his family on the preceding evening, Madame de Hautrivate had almost anticipated the proposal made for her remaining in Paris; and, in fact, would almost as willingly have consented to mount her funeral pile in order to be burnt alive, as have abandoned that only scene of imaginable enjoyment. "*Paris sa grande ville*," was all her world; and at that moment she had certainly no other idea than that of returning as promptly as possible to the perhaps equally agreeable, though less splendid, mode of life which she had established for herself before she had been invited to become the chaperone of her two nieces.

But, on awaking on the following morning, and passing in review, as she sipped her early

coffee, all the circumstances which had so suddenly occurred, it appeared to her far more proper that she should remain where she was, till it was finally decided whether the conduct of her [noble-minded *beau-frère* had been such as to render his permanent absence from the French capital necessary ; or whether the affair would prove only one of those passing sparks of political excitement which render the position of *la belle France* so inexpressibly interesting.

There was much that she felt to be particularly agreeable in thus remaining alone in Mr. Hargrave's mansion. She was certain that by doing so she should play the part of a political heroine, *à très bon marché*, in every sense of the phrase, and that nobody worth seeing in Paris would fail to pay their compliments to her under the circumstances. The fear, therefore, which had tormented Count Romanhoff, as he drove along, that the lady might altogether refuse to receive visitors, was quite unfounded ; for the first order of the day, given by Madame de Hautrivate to her *femme de*

chambre, was, that she should make it known to "the people of the anti-chamber" that whoever called was to be admitted.

If Count Romanhoff particularly wished for a *tête-à-tête* he was disappointed, for when he entered the spacious drawing-room selected by Madame de Hautrivate as that in which she should best like to receive her inquiring friends, he found it already half full. But whatever his previous wishes on the subject might have been, he was soon reconciled to the actual state of things, by perceiving that the process of examination and cross-examination was going on in the most satisfactory manner possible, whilst Madame de Hautrivate appeared as desirous of answering, as her friends of asking, questions; and thus, while he obtained all the information she was able to give, he escaped the necessity of paying for it, by such expressions of lively interest in her own share of the business, as those who questioned her felt it necessary to express.

"Ah! but it is you I think of in the midst of all this!" said a peer of France, in a tone

of the deepest sentiment. “ My charming friend, I dread a nervous attack for you!”

“ Alas! yes—I must expect it,” replied Madame de Hautrivate, applying a golden *flacon* to her nose, and a richly embroidered pocket-hankerchief to her temples. “ *Mais le moyen de l’éviter?*”

“ The only *moyen* is to be found in your own noble heart,” said another gentleman, who, seated close beside her, with his thin person bent forward, so as to enable him to turn and regard her, *en face*, as she spoke, seemed determined to endure no ignorance which questions either of eyes or lips could remove.

“ *La cause est si belle!*” he continued, “ that it becomes a glory to take part in it, *coute qui coute*. But tell me, I implore you, where is your noble relative gone? There are none here but trustworthy friends, be sure of it; *et puis*, if he is out of the kingdom, you know, there can be no danger in gratifying our affectionate curiosity, for all danger must then be over.”

“ *Eh, bien, bons amis,*” replied Madame de Hautrivate, looking gratefully round her, “ that is perfectly true, and it is precisely for that reason that I may indulge in an *épouchement de cœur*, which the frankness of my temper renders so necessary to me. *Mais prenons garde!* And never let us forget that the fate of kings may hang upon our breath! *Ah, quelle idée superbe!*” And here the golden *flacon* was of the greatest service, for it was evident, from the closing of the eyes and the general agitation of her person, that Madame de Hautrivate must have fainted without it.

“ *Mais, au nom de Dieu, poursuivez, chère, donc!* Where is our estimable friend? Where are M. Hargrave and his charming daughters?” fervently demanded the gentleman by her side.

“ At this moment,” replied Madame de Hautrivate solemnly, raising her prodigious eyes to Heaven, while her hands, *flacon*, and handkerchief, admirably grouped together, were elevated before her to the level of her nose, but several inches in advance of it,—“ at this moment, by the blessing of the *bon Dieu*, I

flatter myself they are at the foot of the English throne, and enjoying the benign protection of a race remarkable for their love of noble needs!"

"*Mais déjà!*" exclaimed the peer, raising his flexible eyebrows nearly to the top of his forehead; "*ma chère amie*, I saw him last night, and his beautiful daughter also, à l'*Ambassade d'*—"

"*Mais oui, certainement, monsieur, ils y était—cependant —*" And here Madame de Hautrivate stopped, as if there was something of mystery in the explanation she wished to give; upon which her thin neighbour exclaimed,—

"*Expliquez-vous, madame! Au nom de grace!* How can this be? Remember M. Hargrave counts among our dearest friends, and affection so devoted demands confidence."

"*Mais certainement,*" replied Madame de Hautrivate, with a very graceful action betokening thanks, "the heart should be of marble that could refuse you! My noble-minded *beau-frère*, then, and both his lovely daughters, immediately upon leaving the Am-

bassador's last night, threw themselves into a *berline*, with four, or, I believe, five post horses attached to it, and set off, *ventre à terre*, for Calais. *Mon beau-frère est énormément riche*, and all the world knows what gold can do."

"*Mais c'est vrai, c'est bien vrai!*" returned the thin gentleman. "It is to Calais, then, that our *cher M. Hargrave* is gone?"

"*Mais oui, monsieur, à Calais,*" was the reply.

This statement was so point blank, and it seemed so very little probable that the dwelling of Mr. Hargrave, the lady who presided over his family, his servants, and every thing else belonging to the mansion, should be thus completely *in statu quo*, had the words uttered by the attendants in the Ambassador's hall contained any mixture of truth, that Count Romanhoff, satisfied that in this case the more general report was the true one, rose to go as soon as the decisive words "*à Calais*" reached his ears. Just as he reached the door, another gentleman, released from his attendance, as it seemed, by the same conclusive assertion, reached it also, and as he

civilly retreated a step for the Count to pass, that gentleman looked in his face to ascertain whether this mark of respect proceeded from an acquaintance.

He at once saw that this was not the case, for though the individual was exceedingly well dressed, even to precision, the quick eye of Romanhoff perceived, in an instant, that he was not, as he would have expressed it, *de nous autres*. This was the result of the first glance ; but after he had withdrawn his eyes, an idea struck him that he had seen the face before, and that recently, but where, or exactly when, he could not recall.

The feeling inevitably consequent upon this sort of puzzle is the wish to get another look at the features which have produced it ; and Count Romanhoff, after descending the stairs with the rapid step of an active young man, paused at the bottom of them to indulge this wish.

The stranger was close behind him, and, as the Count turned to look at him, a classic sort of an Italian profile, very remarkable for its outline, recalled, in an instant, that of the

person whom he had seen conversing with Mr. Hargrave on the night of the ball, when he was escorting Mademoiselle de Cordillac to the supper-table.

Under any other circumstances the sight of this man, and the recollections of the words which he had heard addressed to him, which, at the time they were spoken, made but the slight impression which the private manœuvres of one dissipated man might be expected to do upon another,—under any other circumstances, this recognition, and the recollections which accompanied it, would have only produced a desire to get out of the way ; but now it suddenly occurred to Romanhoff that neither of the versions which had reached him concerning the absence of Mr. Hargrave were in any way consistent with the adventure of which he had been himself in some sort the witness.

Was it possible that the strange appearance of Mademoiselle de Cordillac had, in reality, nothing to do with the evasion of her step-father and her sister ?

Was it possible that he had, after all, mistaken a stranger, bearing resemblance to the

beloved of his friend, for the young lady herself?

Was it possible that this full-dressed melodramatic-looking personage could throw any light upon the circumstances that so tormentingly puzzled him? The torment, by the way, being, to do the Count justice, produced less by baffled curiosity than by a fear of reporting to his friend Coventry any thing that was not strictly true concerning Mr. Hargrave or any of his family, well aware that what might fall harmless, as mere idle words, elsewhere, would to Alfred appear matters of deepest consequence.

It is a mightily tedious process to write down the thoughts of a man; for long and long before one phasis of the varying surface be described, another succeeds, and another, and another, setting the recording pen at utter defiance. In much less time than it has taken to write a single word of the above sketch of Count Romanhoff's meditations, they had all passed through his mind, and, moreover, he had formed the resolution of addressing the Italian behind him, in the hope of obtaining

something from him which might throw a light upon the subject.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, civilly touching his hat, "but I should be excessively obliged if you could explain to me a little more clearly than our good friend Madame de Hautrivage has done, what it is which has induced Mr. Hargrave so suddenly to leave the French capital? I am much interested about him, and it would be a great kindness if you could give me any information on the subject."

Now, though the person of Signor Ruperto was only known to Count Romanhoff in the very slight degree that has been described, and that his name was not known to him at all, the Signor was perfectly well acquainted with both the name and person of Count Romanhoff, and was perfectly aware that he was a young nobleman, possessed of great wealth, and a free hand wherewithal to scatter it. This was precisely the class and order of man with whom the active and serviceable Italian liked to make acquaintance, and taking off his hat with much respect, he said, with

a very graceful bow, that nothing could give him more pleasure than conversing on any subject with the celebrated and highly esteemed Count Romanhoff.

“ You are very obliging, sir,” replied the young man, looking earnestly at him. “ May I take the liberty of asking to whom I have the honour of addressing myself?”

The Italian for a moment seemed to hesitate, and then, with the air of one who has *pris son parti*, he said,—

“ My name, Count Romanhoff, will probably not convey much information to you; nevertheless, I have no inclination to withhold it. My name is Julio Ruperto, and in most of the capitals of Europe I have been fortunate enough to make, sooner or later, the acquaintance of nearly all the men of fashion to be found in them. I am not, however, noble; I pretend to nothing which does not belong to me. A certain knowledge of the world, rather more general—I believe I might say universal—than often seems to fall to the lot of an individual, has made me, I am proud to say it, useful to many of them. Should

I ever be able to add the name of Count Romanhoff to the list of those to whom I have been fortunate enough to render service, I shall esteem the chance which has now brought me acquainted with him as a most happy one. Perhaps, Count, I might not at so very early a stage of our intercourse have spoken to you so explicitly as I am now doing, were it not that a considerable degree of confidential openness is necessary before I can have the honour of answering, with any degree of sincerity, the questions you have put to me with such amiable frankness respecting M. Hargrave."

Here Signor Julio Ruperto paused, and again bowing to the Count, seemed to await his reply.

Count Romanhoff would have been better pleased if the confidential information hinted at had been given without his again addressing himself to the equivocal personage beside him. The Count's carriage had set him down outside the gates of the large court in which Mr. Hargrave's hotel stood, and was waiting for him when he left it. The above conversa-

tion, therefore, had taken place between the door of the mansion and the *porte-cochère* in front of it, and they now stood together beside the carriage.

Count Romanhoff paused and felt that he had put himself into a dilemma. He must now either submit to ask Signor Julio Ruperto to mount his carriage, or walk forward with him, ordering his equipage to follow. There was, indeed, one way by which he might have escaped from between these threatening horns : he might have bowed himself off, on the score of being too much occupied at the present moment to listen to the communication which the Signor was so obligingly ready to make. He longed to do this, for he had taken the Italian in utter aversion ; but then he must, in all likelihood, remain hopelessly endeavouring to look through the atmosphere of darkness visible that surrounded Mr. Hargrave and his affairs.

The Count was decidedly very curious upon the subject for his own sake, and seriously anxious for that of his friend ; so, at length, he replied, but somewhat coldly, “ You are very

obliging, sir. If you will do me the favour to drive with me as far as the end of the Italian Boulevard, where I have a visit to pay, I shall be able to profit by the communication you have promised to make. Will this be taking you out of your way, sir?"

"Not the least in the world, Monsieur le Comte," replied the Italian, lightly springing into the ready equipage. "Le Boulevard des Italiens can never be considered as out of the way by a man of the world of any nation, and assuredly not by one of mine; its nature, as well as its name, belongs to us. Sunny, bright, brilliant, and beautiful, it well deserves the inviting name it has received. And now," he continued, taking off his hat and placing himself much at his ease in the corner of the carriage,—"now I will confidentially hint what I have no doubt, M. le Comte, will very considerably surprise you. But observe, M. le Comte, I give you my honour," and Signor Julio Ruperto pressed his hand upon his heart,—"I give you my honour, Count Romanhoff, that had Mr. Hargrave kept his engagements

to me, I would not have broken mine to him ; but it is desirable—highly desirable, that all gentlemen should be taught to understand that the promises and the faith of men of honour are reciprocal. When an engagement is broken, Count Romanhoff, it is broken. It cannot hold on one side and be loose on the other. It is contrary to the nature of things,—it is impossible !”

Again the Italian seemed to expect that Count Romanhoff would speak, but he did not.

“ My motive in calling at the house to-day,” resumed the Italian, “ was to ascertain where the gay Englishman had betaken himself. I have no acquaintance whatever with any of the ladies of the family, but when I was about to question the domestics I observed such multitudes of visitors admitted that I thought I might without difficulty pass in with the rest ; and though it rarely happens that so much can be learned on any domestic subject in the *salon* as in the ante-room, I still wished to hear what account the family themselves might give of

the absent gentleman. And you heard, sir, as well as I did, I presume, that he is gone to Calais?"

"Yes, sir, I did," replied Count Romanhoff, "and therefore it is not on that point that I ventured to ask you for information. I confess, I wish, if possible, to know what reason could have induced Mr. Hargrave to leave Paris in the manner he has done?"

Signor Julio Ruperto laughed slightly. "Be not impatient, noble Count," he said, "I shall reach that division of the subject immediately; and I suspect that you will be a good deal surprised at what I shall have to tell you, for already two distinct romances have been invented both equally foreign from the truth. It is not improbable that you have heard both. *One* we had both of us the advantage of hearing freely discussed in the *salon* we have just quitted. You heard it roundly stated—did you not?—that Mr. Hargrave had been obliged to leave Paris recently in order to escape from the hands of the police who are in search of him, on account of a political intrigue into which he

is said to have deeply entered. You heard this, Count Romanhoff, did you not?"

"I did, sir," replied Romanhoff stiffly.

"And perhaps, also, you have heard the other story; more likely, for any thing I know, to be true, and nevertheless most absurdly false. Have you heard this second version, Count?"

"I have heard nothing distinctly," replied the Count, evasively, "excepting what you heard also in the *salon* of Madame de Hautrivate."

"Nay, then, *sans façon*, I will tell you that the other story which has got into circulation is of a much more disgraceful character, and if true would render our friend liable to the galleys for life, or to the guillotine itself, if the worst parts of the history were proved. In short, it has been broadly asserted, particularly among the lower classes, that Mr. Hargrave carried off Madame Bertrand, the rich banker's wife, from his own hall, robbed her of her diamonds, and then murdered her. I give you my honour that such a story is in circulation."

"It is a consolation in hearing such horrors

stated," replied Count Romanhoff, "to hear at the same time the positive contradiction of them which you seem disposed to give. If I rightly understand what you have said, you mean to declare on your own knowledge, sir, that this frightful statement has no foundation in truth?"

"Why really, sir, though I have no particular reason to think well of Mr. Hargrave, inasmuch as he has very grossly defrauded me of a sum of money that was justly my due, I nevertheless am rather peculiarly well able to assure you that there is not a single word of truth in this story from beginning to end. As a gay and gallant young gentleman, Count, you will find the true version of the romance considerably less difficult to believe; and I have no scruple in the world to confess that I was myself a party in the business, and therefore have some right to understand it."

"I shall be obliged by your letting me hear it from you," said the Count, perceiving that his companion again appeared to expect that he should say something.

"That is enough, sir," replied the Italian,

with *empressement*. “It is my wish to oblige the noble Count Romanhoff, and my history of this matter shall be equally unreserved and true. Mr. Hargrave and I have known each other for some time; that, however, is not to the purpose. A day or two before the grand ball which took place last night, he called upon me at my lodgings—here is my address, Count” (presenting a card)—“and with his usual frank and easy manner told me that he had conceived a violent passion for Madame Bertrand, that he had no great reason for thinking that he was disagreeable to her, but that such was the watchfulness of her husband, and such her extreme terror of him, that he was quite convinced an elopement was the only means by which he could hope to obtain her. To this decisive step he confessed that he should not venture to ask her consent, though he feared not her ultimate resentment. To make my story short, suffice it to say that I agreed to assist him in this enterprise. I promised to have a carriage at a certain door of the garden, which, opening upon a passage that led only to the stables, was as retired as

the business required. No servant was to be in attendance, and the driver had orders to set off with all speed to a certain dwelling which I indicated to him, as soon as he perceived by the shutting of the carriage-door that the party to be conveyed was in it, but that no word was to be spoken, nor was he to wait for or expect any further orders. *Eh, bien !* M. le Comte, I executed my part of the business to perfection. I hung about the premises, easy enough of access at a moment when all the world was coming in, and contrived to receive my last instructions from Mr. Hargrave a few moments before he led the lady into supper. He assured me in his gay way that he had every reason to be certain he was not going to offend her beyond forgiveness, and then instructed me as to the exact spot where I was to receive her from his hands at a moment when he should lift the canvass of his temporary buildings in order to refresh her with a little air after the dance ; he was then to retreat into the room that he might be seen again amidst the crowd by any who had marked his manœuvring with the canvass, though of course his object was to choose, if

possible, a moment when the spot he had selected was free from observation. All this was accomplished very successfully. Provided with a cloak in which to envelope her, I held her very snugly *empaquetée* till her adorer again joined us, and then I placed my charming *fardeau* in his arms, making my escape again into the house, where if, *par malheur*, any alarm concerning the lady was given, I was to volunteer an account of having seen her in a way to delude all inquiries as much as possible. All this I faithfully performed: and you will allow, Count, that it was a service of danger and well deserving some reward. Will you then believe me when I tell you that I have received none—that I am positively cheated—*joué*—by this gallant gentleman? But if I am not revenged, may every man I meet laugh me to scorn! At ten o'clock this morning I was ordered to call at a particular place where I should find a sealed packet addressed to me. Since that hour, I have called six times, and found nothing, and doubtless *il se moque de moi*, and thinks that I dare not repeat such a tale as this. *Mais il se trompe joliment*, I have learned

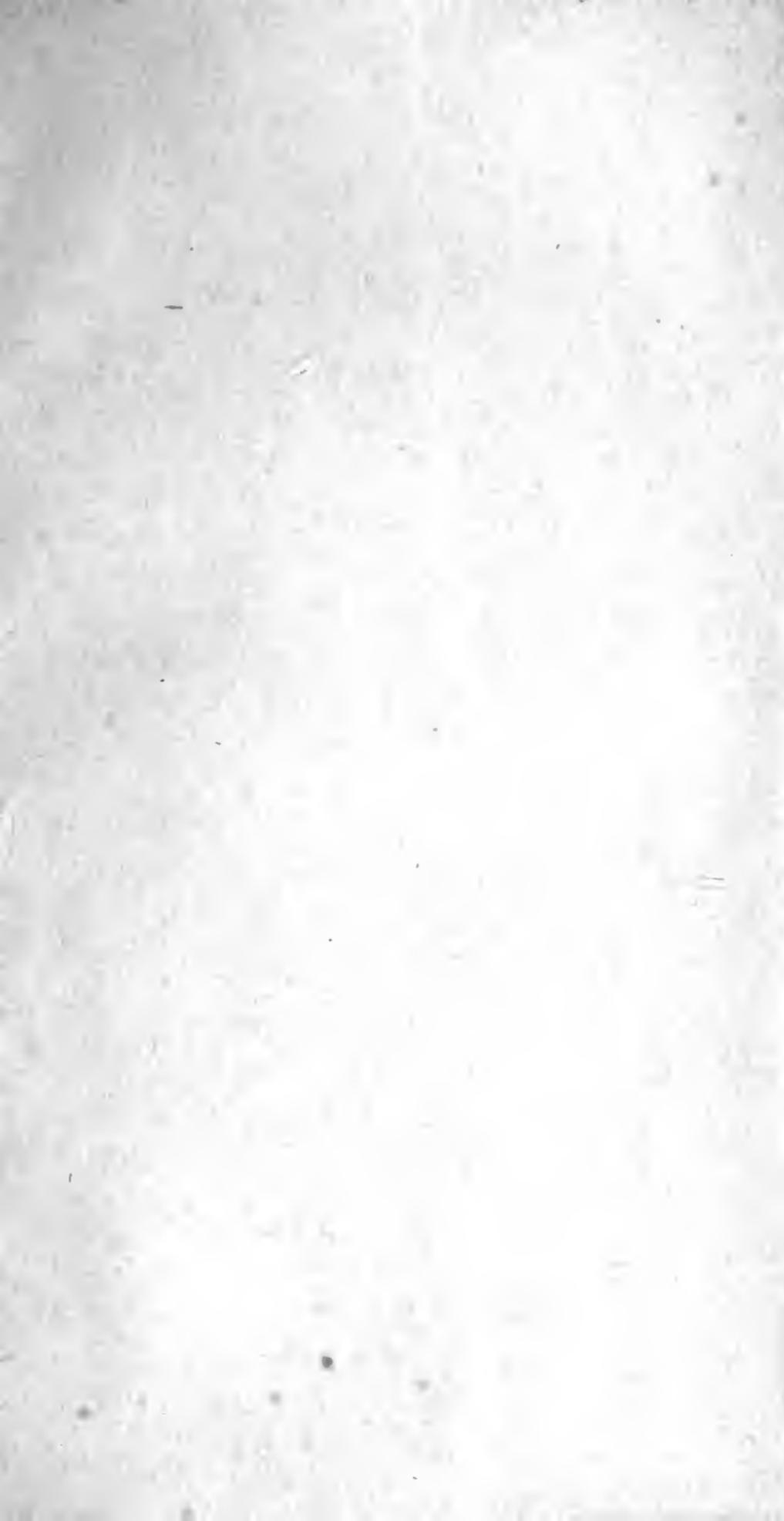
where I can find him, and find him I will! And now, M. le Comte, I will wish you good morning, and beg you to believe that there is nothing which I should not be ready to do *avec la plus grande fidélité* for any gentleman of honour who did not abuse my generous confidence."

Count Romanhoff, by this time desiring nothing so much as to get rid of his companion, pulled the check-string. The carriage stopped, the step was taken down, and in another moment he had the satisfaction of finding himself alone.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY MOYES AND BARCLAY, CASTLE STREET,
LEICESTER SQUARE.







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